LETTERS AND DIALOGUES,

BETWEEN

THERON, PAULINUS, and *ASPASIO.*

Upon the Nature of

LOVE TO GOD, FAITH IN CHRIST, AND | ASSURANCE OF A TITLE TO ETERNAL LIFE.

With ſome REMARKS on

The Sentiments of the Rev. Meſſrs. HERVEY and MARSHAL, on theſe Subjects.

Publiſhed at the Requeſt of many.

By JOSEPH BELLAMY, *A.M.*
of Bethlem in New England.

Amidſt all the Darkneſs and Uncertainty which evidently run thro' the Writings of the beſt of Men, this is our unſpeakable Happineſs, that we have a more ſure Word of Prophecy; to which we do well to take heed. — *As for* Offence; *that cannot be given, and ought not to be taken, when all we advance is ſtrictly conformable to the unerring Rule of Truth. — I have nothing to do with the Perſons of Men, but with the Truths of the Goſpel.— OURANIUS, tho' eminently devout, may be miſtaken.*

Rev. Mr JAMES HERVEY.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

IF PAULINUS's Sentiments, finally embraced by THERON, and exhibited in the following LETTERS and DIALOGUES, are agreeable to the holy ſcriptures, there needs no apology for publiſhing them, at a time when the contrary errors ſo much prevail in the Britiſh dominions. And it is hoped, candid Readers will eaſily excuſe the mentioning by name ſome Authors, in the contrary ſcheme, as they ſeem to be eſteemed the beſt on that ſide of the queſtion. If his ſentiments are wrong, let ſome man of a clear head and friendly heart ſet him right, from the ſacred Oracles of truth. And it will be accepted, as well by him, as by the public, with the utmoſt gratitude. For theſe are points, in which our deareſt, our ſpiritual and eternal intereſt is greatly concerned: And it is even of infinite importance, that we know the truth before it is too late.

'Should any thing be urged,' ſays Mr HERVEY (in the Preface to his

THERON and ASPASIO) 'forcible enough 'to overthrow my arguments, or de- 'tect a miſtake in my ſentiments, the 'world may depend upon ſeeing a 'free and undiſſembled retractation. 'I ſhall look upon it as a duty which 'I owe to my Conſcience, to my Read- 'ers, and to my God, publicly to ac- 'knowledge the error.' And indeed, we who claim to be the Miniſters of Chriſt, are quite inſenſible to the honour of God, and to our own eternal intereſt, as well as to the eternal intereſt of our fellow-creatures; if we are not conſcientiouſly concerned to advance and maintain the truth, and nothing but the truth. Wherefore, to the above-recited declaration of Mr HERVEY, the Publiſher of theſe *Letters* and *Dialogues*, ſays, AMEN, with all his heart.

Note, As PAULINUS had ſome other books in view, beſides the two chiefly referred to; ſo THERON has ſometimes introduced a text of ſcripture, an argument, &c. not contained in either of theſe books, and for which theſe two Authors are not anſwerable.

THE

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LETTER I.

THERON *relates to his friend* ASPASIO *his ſoul-diſtreſs, his comfort, the nature of his faith, and of his living by faith, his declining in religion, his doubts, his diſtreſſing fears, his reſolution to viſit* PAULINUS. — *And in this Letter ſends incloſed to* ASPASIO *the ſubſtance of his converſation with* PAULINUS, *at three ſeveral times, in the form of* THREE DIALOGUES.

DIALOGUE I.

THERON, *willing to conceal the ſtate of his own ſoul from* PAULINUS, *and deſirous to hear the points diſputed on which his own caſe depends, inquires his opinion concerning ſome doctrines inculcated in* The Reverend Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues, and in* Mr MARSHAL's *Goſpel-Myſtery; and urges him to ſpeak his ſentiments freely. States his* Queſtions, *viz.* What is the nature of Love to God? — of juſtifying Faith? — and of Aſſurance of a title to Eternal Life? *Begins with aſking,* What is the primary and chief motive of Love to God?

Grants that God is to be loved with all the heart. That all mankind, the heathen not excepted, are by law obliged to love God with all the heart, on pain of his eternal wrath; and that this law is holy, just and good.—PAULINUS from these concessions
B *shews, that there must be sufficient reasons and grounds to love God, previous to our knowing that he is our reconciled Father in Christ; as all mankind have not this knowledge, and as it cannot be had till after we begin to love God; nor is it impossible to love God for his own loveliness. Were our hearts right it would be natural to do it. The heathen, who never heard of the grace of the gospel, are obliged to do it, on pain of eternal destruction. "The law, which enjoins this, is holy, just and good;" else the death of Christ was needless. This law must appear to us to be good, or we cannot see the wisdom of God in the death of his Son, or believe the gospel to be true with all our hearts.—THERON proposes a different scheme; argues that as our enmity against God arises merely from viewing God as our enemy, so our love arises from a belief that he is our friend. Which PAULINUS confutes. The true sense of* 1 John iv. 16, 19. *inquired into. To love God merely because he loves us, contrary to common sense: and essentially different from true love.*

DIALOGUE II.

THERON defines justifying Faith to be a belief 'that Christ died for me, my sins are forgiven, and 'I shall certainly be saved.' *Explains his definition. Grants that he works up himself to this belief without any evidence from scripture, sense, or reason; in a large quotation from* Mr MARSHAL. *However affirms,*

affirms, that according to his faith ſo ſhall it be to him. *PAULINUS in twelve* Queries, *ſhews this notion of faith is contrary to ſcripture, and to the plain dictates of common ſenſe.*—*THERON relates how this faith was wrought in his heart. And endeavours to juſtify his notion from ſcripture: as the promiſes are made to ſuch a heavy-laden ſinner as he was. Beſides, as an abandoned ſinner, all the bleſſings of the goſpel were his by the unconditional grant of the goſpel. Which he labours to confirm from God's manner of ſpeaking to* Iſrael *of old. And argues, it is the nature of faith to appropriate; from St* Paul's *definition; from the figurative deſcriptions of faith; from the report of the goſpel; from the promiſe of Chriſt, that "* ac-*" cording to our faith ſo ſhall it be to us:" from our being commanded to "* aſk *in faith:" and our being aſſured that "* if we believe we receive," *we ſhall receive: from God's promiſe and oath ſtanding engaged: from the example of this faith, in the apoſtle* THOMAS. *All which* PAULINUS *anſwers: And ſhews that the texts referred to are perverted. No warrant from ſcripture for this belief. Nor from the witneſs of the Spirit.*—*THERON urges that it is impoſſible to truſt in Chriſt without this previous belief.* PAULINUS *ſhews, that if one is encouraged to truſt in Chriſt from this belief, he builds on a falſe foundation. Points out the true grounds and real nature of ſaving faith. Gives the character of a true convert. Shews the difficulties in the way of true faith, and how they are removed: and the difference between a true and a falſe faith.*

DIALOGUE III.

PAULINUS asserts that Assurance *may be obtained and maintained; yet only by sanctification; living in the daily exercise of grace; which every true Christian may do.—THERON urges, that as some Christians are in dead and stupid frames a long while, so assurance must be obtained some other way than by sanctification. PAULINUS appeals to our Saviour's Sermon on the mount: of which he takes a particular view.—THERON thinks, a few signs of grace will suffice; and fears, that making sanctification our only test will wound weak Christians; and insists that it is better to live by faith. PAULINUS urges that as true faith brings forth fruit; so by its fruits it may be known. "Faith without works is dead."—THERON insists that we ought to believe in the dark; and that it is a sin to doubt; and appeals to scripture. PAULINUS considers the texts he refers to. Shews that we ought not to believe without evidence. That scripture saints make sanctification their only test.—THERON insists that it is impossible to maintain assurance this way; rather it will perplex weak Christians; and has recourse to the witness of the Spirit. PAULINUS having answered his reasonings, shews what the witness of the Spirit is; answers* Objections; *and then sums up the whole. Shews how infinitely dangerous it is to venture into eternity on THERON's scheme.—THERON finally gives up his scheme: freely opens the state of his soul: asks advice. PAULINUS gives him some directions. And after friendly salutations they part.—THERON retires fully determined to seek after a saving conversion.—Sends a copy of these* Dialogues *to his friend ASPASIO.*

LETTER

LETTER II.

THERON about three months after, having in the mean time experienced a saving conversion, writes a brief narrative of what he had passed through, to his friend ASPASIO.

LETTER III.

THERON soon writes again, and delivers his present sentiments on the grounds and nature of saving Faith, *and of* Assurance; *which he labours to illustrate.*

LETTER IV.

THERON leads his friend ASPASIO to take a view of the supreme glory of the divine nature, as the foundation of all true Religion; as that without which the great doctrines of revelation must be given up. And hints how his former views of things tended to infidelity.

LETTER V.

THERON, from a view of the glory of God and the goodness of his law, shews the nature of being dead to the law, and living on Christ.—Gives a summary representation of the true Christian temper and life, from the experiences and writings of St Paul.—*And concludes with an humble request, that his friend ASPASIO would employ his entertaining pen to warn ignorant benighted sinners, of the danger they are in of wandering in that delusive road in which his Pupil had like to have been for ever lost.*

Postscript.

Poſtſcript by another Hand.

AS it appears by the concluſion of THERON's laſt Letter, that he had not then received the melancholy tidings of his dear friend ASPASIO's death, no candid Reader will object to him the abſurdity of writing letters to the dead. And it will be an abuſe upon the Publiſher of this piece, to ſuppoſe it in his intention, to detract from the character of ſuch worthy men as Mr HERVEY and Mr MARSHAL, or to hinder the peruſal of their writings. In theſe, no doubt, he ſaw many excellencies; and was not inſenſible, they might give a judicious Reader not a little profitable entertainment, by the bleſſing of God. However, as he apprehended the truth, in ſome important caſes, clouded by ſome unhappy miſtakes, while he rejoiced in the former, he was willing to bear his teſtimony againſt the latter. And whatever "Honours are due to the memory of the "juſt," if the doctrine of Chriſt, their Lord and ours, has ſuffered, or is liable to ſuffer, in any meaſure, by means of their miſtakes; *that* has an unqueſtionable claim to ſuperior honours, and ought in all things to have the preeminence.

LETTERS AND DIALOGUES.

LETTER I.

THERON to ASPASIO.

NEW-ENGLAND, Dec. 15, 1758.

Dear ASPASIO,

NEWS from your THERON, now in this remote corner of the earth, you will eagerly expect, by every ſhip that ſails from theſe parts. But, O my Friend! what ſhall I write, No pleaſant walks, no beautiful gardens, no romantic mounts, my dear ASPASIO, nor any other theme to entertain and to amuſe, muſt you expect from me! Alas, I have been deceived! My hopes, once high raiſed, are, I think, entirely gone

gone (*a*). As the "rush without mire, and "the flag without water; so the hypocrite's "hope shall perish (*b*)."

As I was walking in my garden, soon after our visit to PHILENOR (*c*), (which was, as I remember, about the middle of harvest A. D. 1754.) musing on all your agreeable conversation, your fervent zeal, and how you urged me to believe: To believe what? said I, to myself.—To believe that "Christ "died for ME."—How, "for ME?" thought I.—ASPASIO knows, I believe that Christ died for sinners.—Yes, but he would have me apply that to my own soul; and believe Christ died "for me."—ASPASIO knows, I believe that Christ died, that whosoever, according to the true sense of the gospel, "believes in him, should not perish, but have "everlasting life."—Is this believing in him? Is this justifying, saving faith? to believe I am one that he died for,—one for whom he intended to procure pardon, reconciliation with God, and eternal life?—Yes, this, this is faith.—'A real persuasion that the 'blessed Jesus has shed his blood for me, 'and

(*a*) See Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, Vol. III. p. 313. first Edit. *Note*, The *first* Edition of Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues* is referred to in this Letter; as THERON is supposed, soon after the Conversation at PHILENOR's, to have experienced what follows.

(*b*) Job viii. 11, 13.

(*c*) Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, Vol. III. p. 262.

" and fulfilled all righteouſneſs in my " ſtead, that through this great atonement " and glorious obedience, he has purchaſed, " even for my ſinful ſoul, ſanctifying grace, " and all ſpiritual bleſſings (*d*).'—To believe it was for me, juſt as if I had been mentioned by name: even, juſt as my tenant believed me, when, in his laſt ſickneſs, I ſent a meſſage, aſſuring him, I had cancelled the bond, and forgiven his debt (*e*). And juſt as *David* believed the kingdom of *Iſrael* ſhould be his own, on the expreſs promiſe of almighty God (*f*). And juſt as I believe my lands to be my own, by the deeds of conveyance (*g*). In a word, ASPASIO would have me go to God, and ſay, 'Pardon is mine, Grace is mine, 'Chriſt and all his ſpiritual bleſſings are 'mine;' not becauſe I am conſcious of ſanctifying operations in my own breaſt, but becauſe I am conſcious I am a ſinner. All theſe bleſſings being conſigned over to me, as ſuch, in the everlaſting goſpel; with a clearneſs unqueſtionable as the truth, with a certainty inviolable as the oath of God (*h*). No clogging qualifications inſiſted on: only

(*d*) Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, Vol. III. p. 278.
(*e*) Ibid. Pag. 279. (*f*) p. 309. (*g*) p. 312.
(*h*) Pag. 280, 313.

only believe, and all is mine (*i*). I longed to know that Chriſt was mine (*k*).

And could I ſee my title clear
To manſions in the ſkies,
I'd bid farewel to every tear,
And wipe my weeping eyes.

But how can I ſee! how can I believe! O my unbelieving heart! what ſhall I do?—'Cry to God for help,' ſays my Aspasio. Seek the bleſſed Spirit to teſtify, that God "has given me eternal life; and this life "is in his Son. And to witneſs with my "ſpirit that I am a child of God (*l*)."

Thus, as I walked, I muſed—my heart was full—I ſtopped—with eyes lift up to heaven, I ſaid—"I believe, Lord, help my "unbelief." I thought of *Calvary*. I heard the "ſoundings of his bowels, and "of his mercies towards me. O thou of "little faith! wherefore doſt thou doubt "(*m*)?" Wherefore doſt thou doubt of my love to thee, for whom I have ſhed my blood?

I believed; I was raviſhed; I was full of love, joy and gratitude: and with eyes again lift up to heaven, I ſaid—'Glory be 'to

(*i*) Mr Hervey's *Dialogues*, Vol. III. Pag. 275.
(*k*) Ibid. p. 253, 254. (*l*) p. 316. (*m*) p. 276, 277.

'to the Holy Ghoſt for teſtifying of Chriſt 'in my heart, and appropriating this 'great ſalvation to my ſoul (*n*).' And thus I continued rejoicing for ſeveral days, and thought I ſhould never doubt again.

BUT, O, alas! the ſcene ſoon changed. I gradually loſt a ſenſe of my great danger, and great deliverance; as the *Iſraelites*, who "ſang God's praiſe, but ſoon forgat his "works;" or like the ſtony-ground hearers, who "heard the word with joy, en-"dured for a while, and fell away." Or rather like the thorny-ground; for, as about this time I removed into *New-England*, "the cares of the world came in upon me, "and choked the word, and I brought "forth no fruit;" rather, I loſt all diſpoſition to pray or praiſe, and my devotions degenerated into mere formality.

AND now unbelief, as I then called it, began to work. 'Surely all is mere delu-'ſion,' thought I. But, again, I ſaid, "This is my infirmity." And thoſe words of ſcripture were ſome comfort to me. "O "thou of little faith, wherefore doſt thou "doubt?—Who againſt hope believed in "hope;—Who walk in darkneſs and ſee no "light; let them truſt in the Lord, and "ſtay themſelves on their God.—Why art "thou.

(*n*) Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, Vol. I. p. 156.

" thou caſt down, O my ſoul; hope thou in " God (*o*)." And I watched and prayed, and ſtrove againſt my unbelieving thoughts (*p*).

FROM this time forward, having no clear marks or ſigns of grace for my comfort, nor any new manifeſtations of the love of God to my ſoul, I began, as you had directed, in ſuch a caſe, to " live by faith." I uſed every day to go to God, and ſay, " Pardon is mine; Grace is mine; Chriſt " and all his ſpiritual Bleſſings are mine." And thus, unconſcious of any ſanctifying operations in my own breaſt, I lived wholly by faith; by faith, as I thought, on the promiſe and oath of the unchangeable JEHOVAH (*q*). And thus I continued many months, generally pretty eaſy; although ſometimes troubled with doubts and fears.

BUT above a year ago, as I was reading my Bible, in the thirteenth chapter of St *Matthew*'s goſpel, I found the parable of the Sower; which reached my caſe, and greatly gained the attention of my heart. Here I ſaw the various ſorts of hearers, the different kinds of chriſtians deſcribed; and perceived that none are eſteemed good men by our bleſſed Saviour, but thoſe who like the good ground,

(*o*) Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, Vol. I. p. 289.
(*p*) Ibid. p. 308, 309. (*q*) p. 313, 314.

ground, "bring forth fruit." This ſtartled me! this gave my faith a ſhock, I never could get over!

HOWEVER, not knowing but that I miſtook the meaning of that parable, I reſolved to ſearch the ſcriptures, to ſee if it were really the character of all true believers, to "bring forth fruit," *i. e.* as I underſtood it, to be holy in heart and life. I began with the goſpel of St *Matthew*, and read the New Teſtament through, and made a collection of many texts of ſcripture, which I wrote down, and commented upon. I will give you a ſpecimen from my diary.

'*Nov.* 20, 1757, I retired as uſual to 'read the holy ſcriptures, by which I am to 'be judged at the laſt day.—I began to 'read Chriſt's ſermon on the mount;' "Bleſſed are the poor in ſpirit; bleſſed are "they that mourn; bleſſed are the meek; "—the pure in heart; *&c.*" 'But alas, O 'my ſoul, I am not conſcious of theſe good 'qualifications: are there not, nevertheleſs, 'bleſſings laid up for me?—I read on to 'chapter vii. 19—27.' "Every tree that "bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn "down and caſt into the fire: By their "fruits ye ſhall know them: Not every "one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall

"enter

" enter into the kingdom of heaven, but " he that doth the will of my Father " which is in heaven."—'This, this, O my 'ſoul, reaches my very caſe! this is my 'character! and this my doom!—The 'following verſes condemn me too: I am 'the man that has " built his houſe upon " the ſand." Thus far my diary.

But how diſcouraging ſoever all this appeared, yet ſtill I maintained ſome ſecret thoughts, that I was only a backſlider, and ſhould ſee things clearer after a while.—Beſides, to give up my hopes, and look upon myſelf a poor chriſtleſs ſinner, after I had ſo long ſettled down in quiet, was like death to my ſpirits!—It opened a moſt frightful proſpect before me.—If not converted now, moſt probably I never ſhall be! I had as good live on in pleaſing deluſion, as ſink down into deſpair!

And beſides, I remember you had ſaid, 'This method of ſeeking peace and aſſur-'ance,' by ſigns of grace, 'I fear, will 'embaraſs the ſimple minded, and cheriſh 'rather than ſuppreſs the fluctuations of 'doubt; for let the marks be what you 'pleaſe, they are all a feeble and preca-'rious evidence.' And I wiſh I could boldly ſay, as once I did, 'Pardon is 'mine;

'mine; Grace is mine; Chriſt and all his 'ſpiritual Bleſſings are mine; however un-'conſcious of ſanctifying operations in my 'own breaſt (*r*).' But our bleſſed Saviour's words ſtruck terror through my ſoul: "He "that heareth theſe words of mine and "doth them not, is like a fooliſh man, that "built his houſe upon the ſand."

ABOUT this time I was, by a religious perſon, well acquainted with my caſe, directed to Mr SHEPARD on the *Parable of the Ten Virgins*; Mr EDWARDS *on Religious Affections*; Mr BRAINERD's *Life*, and ſome other books of the ſame Stamp; which, ſaid he, are eſteemed by pious people in *New-England*, as the beſt of books on experimental religion. I obtained the books, I read them, they condemned not only my preſent ſtate, but all my notions of religion; and repreſented true religion to conſiſt in ſomething eſſentially different, of which I had never had the leaſt experience; which, inſtead of affording comfort and hope to my dejected mind, did but confirm my former doubts and fears.—What now to do, I could not tell: Here, three thouſand miles from my dear ASPASIO, I cannot ſee his face, nor have his aid. I muſt find out another ſpiritual guide.

(*r*) Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, Vol. I. p. 313.

guide.—I heard of one PAULINUS, a clergyman, a noted friend to vital piety, a tender, faithful guide to bewildered ſouls; but not in my ASPASIO's ſcheme. My conſcience ſaid, 'Go ſee the man, and act an honeſt 'part; tell him all your caſe, be willing to 'know the truth.' My heart replied, 'I can-'not go! I cannot go!'—But as a ſerious, ſolemn ſenſe of the eternal world was now daily growing in my heart, I was ſoon brought to a better mind; particularly in the evening of *December* 8, 1758, as I was alone for ſecret prayer, I had ſuch a ſenſe of eternity,—a boundleſs eternity,—and ſuch a view of the dreadfulneſs of eternal damnation,—the amazement and horror of ſelf-deceived hypocrites, opening their eyes in eternal wo,—who once refuſed to ſee, while there was hope, but now muſt ſee, when all hope is for ever gone; that I ſhuddered, and was ready even to cry out with anguiſh at the terrifying thought, of this being at laſt my dreadful lot! Whereupon, reſolving to be honeſt at all adventures, I determined a viſit the next *Monday* evening. I went, I went again and again,—and knowing my dear ASPASIO would be glad to hear what paſſed, I wrote down the ſubſtance from time to time, which I now ſend encloſed, in the form of *Three Dialogues*;—which, when you have read, I am ſure you will pity

pity my caſe.—And, O my dear ASPASIO, ceaſe not to pray for

Your diſconſolate

THERON.

P. S. I expect no opportunity to write to you again till early next ſpring; when you may look to hear further from your THERON, if on this ſide eternal burnings.—God only knows how that will be.—Adieu, my dear ASPASIO.

DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE I.

ON *Monday* evening *(Dec.* 11.) I had the happineſs to find PAULINUS at home, alone in his ſtudy; he received me with all the politeneſs of a Gentleman, and with all the undiſſembled goodneſs of a Chriſtian. After inquiring into the ſtate of Religion in *Great Britain*, when I came from thence; perceiving, by what was ſaid, my acquaintance with ASPASIO, he made ſome inquiries after him, and his ſentiments of Religion, and about a book he has lately ſo ſtrongly recommended (*s*). Which gave me an opportunity,

(*s*) Mr MARSHAL's *Goſpel Myſtery of Sanctification*; 'which I ſhall not, ſays Mr HERVEY, recommend in 'the ſtile of a critic, or like a reader of taſte, but with 'all the ſimplicity of the weakeſt Chriſtian; I mean, 'from my own experience. It has been made one of 'the moſt uſeful books to my own ſoul: I ſcarce ever 'fail to receive ſpiritual conſolation and ſtrength from 'the peruſal of it. And was I to be baniſhed into 'ſome deſolate iſland, poſſeſſed only of *two* books 'beſides my Bible, this ſhould be *one* of the two, 'and perhaps the firſt that I would chooſe.' *See* Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, third Edit. Vol. III. p. 336.

Note,

portunity, without letting him into the ſtate of my ſoul, a thing I was loth to do, to bring upon the board the topics I deſigned. Wherefore, I began:

THERON. Sir, may I know your ſentiments relative to ſome points in theſe books?

PAULINUS. I am willing you ſhould know my ſentiments on any of the doctriness of Religion; but ſhould chooſe to ſay nothing of the ſentiments of any particular Author by name.

THER. I am ſenſible this is not ſo deſirable, nor ſhould I aſk it, but that I am not a little embaraſſed between the ſcheme of Religion, advanced in Preſident EDWARDS's *Treatiſe on Religious Affections*, and this advanced in theſe books: And I want to know, what may be ſaid in anſwer to the particular arguments of theſe Divines. And I ſhall conſider all you ſay, how plain ſoever: for I deſire you to uſe the greateſt freedom, not in a perſonal light, as deſigned to reflect at all on theſe Authors; but only as deſigned to give inſtruction to me. And if you could particularly anſwer ſeveral things I find in them, it would give me much more ſatisfaction, than to hear your opinion in general.

Note, This third Edition of Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues* is referred to in what follows; and the ſixth Edition of Mr MARSHAL's *Goſpel Myſtery*, &c. As both theſe books contain one compleat ſyſtem, ſo both ſhall be conſidered together.

general. Beſides, you know, what Authors publiſh to the world, they voluntarily ſubmit to the examination of all. And if the good of mankind, which all Authors profeſs to ſeek, calls for a particular examination of any of their writings, they cannot conſiſtently be diſpleaſed, if they are uſed with candor. Theſe Authors themſelves have taken the greateſt freedom to ſpeak of the ſentiments of divines antient and modern. And I know, my dear ASPASIO would be perfectly pleaſed, to hear you, with the utmoſt freedom, make all your remarks and obſervations on his piece; for he is one of the moſt candid, generous, good-natured Gentlemen I ever ſaw: Pray, Sir, therefore make no excuſes, nor be at all upon the reſerve.

PAUL. What particular points, Sir, do you refer to?

THER. 'The nature of Love to God, of 'juſtifying Faith, and of Aſſurance.' — To begin with Love to God. I deſire to know what is the primary and chief motive, which ought to induce me to love God. A view of the ineffable glories of the Deity, as he has manifeſted himſelf in his word and in his works? or a belief of his love to me in particular?

PAUL. Before we enquire into the original grounds of Love to God, pray tell me,

me, What in God are we to love? and how are we to love him?

THER. 'The Lord is not at all loved with 'that Love that is due to him as Lord of 'all, if he be not loved with all our heart, 'and ſpirit, and might. And we are to 'love every thing in him, his juſtice, holi-'neſs, ſovereign authority, all-ſeeing eye, 'and all his degrees, commands, judgments, 'and all his doings (*t*).'

PAUL. Who are under obligations thus to love God; Saints, or ſinners? Chriſtians, or heathens? Some, or all of mankind?

THER. All mankind. Even the heathen, who are without any written Law or ſupernatural Revelation, are obliged by the light of nature to love God with all their hearts; and that under the penalty of God's everlaſting wrath (*u*).

PAUL. If all mankind, even the heathen world not excepted, are thus under infinite obligations to love God with all their hearts, and to "glorify God as God," (to uſe the Apoſtle's expreſſion, *Rom.* i. 21.) it muſt needs be that there is a ground and reaſon of Love to God antecedent to a conſideration of his being our reconciled Father and Friend in Jeſus Chriſt. For the heathen, millions of them, never heard of Jeſus Chriſt. And there are great multitudes in

(*t*) MARSHAL *on Sanctification*, p. 2. (*u*) Ib. p. 4, 5.

the Chriſtian world, who live and die without an intereſt in God's fatherly Love in Chriſt. And yet you ſay, all theſe are under ſuch obligations to love God with all their hearts, that they will deſerve his eternal wrath for the leaſt neglect. And indeed the holy ſcriptures moſt expreſly aſſert the ſame thing (*w*).

THER. But, Sir, is it not impoſſible (*x*) we ſhould love God before we ſee that he is our reconciled Father and Friend in Jeſus Chriſt? We muſt know that our ſins are forgiven, and be well perſuaded that God is reconciled to us, before we can love him (*y*).

PAUL. God never manifeſts himſelf as a reconciled God and Father, to any of the children of men, until they are firſt reconciled to him, and love him (*z*). Their

(*w*) Rom. i. 18—21. Gal. iii. 10.

(*x*) Should a lying fellow bring tidings to an impenitent priſoner juſtly condemned to die for murder, aſſuring him of a pardon from his judge; the deluded murderer might be full of love to his judge, and greatly extol his juſtice, as well as goodneſs, and pour out floods of tears: But on diſcerning his miſtake, he would ſoon return to his former temper.—God's nature and law are juſt the ſame, before he forgives us, as after; and as worthy to be loved. But it is eaſier for an impenitent ſinner to commend God's Law, in a firm belief he is delivered from the curſe, than to love it as being in its own nature holy, juſt and good. Satan knows, it is no evidence of uprightneſs in God's account, that a man is very religious; if all his Religion ariſes from merely ſelfiſh conſiderations, *Job* i. 8, 9, 10, 11.

(*y*) MARSHAL *on Sanctification*, pag. 21—25.

(*z*) John xiv. 21. Acts iii. 19.

firſt Love to God, therefore, muſt of neceſſity begin on ſome other foundation, from ſome other inducement; or they never can begin to love him at all.

THER. But what is there in God, that can induce us to love him, unleſs we firſt know that he loves us? I appeal to the experience of all true ſaints, as inconſiſtent with your ſuppoſition (*a*).

PAUL. This is the language of God's Law, "Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God "with all thy heart." Pray, what reaſons and grounds are there for this law? Anſwer my queſtion firſt, and then I will anſwer yours. Tell me the grounds and reaſons of this law, and I will tell you what there is to induce us to love God before we know that he loves us.

THER. The law teaches us, firſt to believe that "God is our God," our reconciled Father and Friend: "Thou ſhalt "love the Lord THY GOD (*b*)."

PAUL. "God is our God," the God of the whole human race, as he is our Creator, our Preſerver, our rightful Lord and Sovereign, who has an entire and abſolute authority over us: But he is not a reconciled Father and Friend to all the human race. Rather "the whole world lieth "in wickedneſs (*c*)." And the greateſt part

(*a*) MARSHAL *on Sanctification*, pag. 25.
(*b*) Ibid. pag. 28. (*c*) 1 John v. 19.

of mankind are under the divine wrath (*d*). And "God is angry with them every day;" his *ſoul hates* them, and he is *whetting his ſword* for their deſtruction, if they repent not (*e*). And yet even while in ſuch a ſtate, you grant, they are under infinite obligations to love God with all their hearts; and that the leaſt defect expoſes them to eternal damnation. Nor have you granted any more than St *Paul* expreſly aſſerts (*f*). —Now, pray, tell me, is this a reaſonable law?

THER. I grant, this law is holy, juſt and good (*g*).

PAUL. But then it will follow, that there are reaſons and grounds why God ſhould be thus loved, antecedent to a conſideration of his being our reconciled Father and Friend. Reaſons and grounds which are ſufficient; which really oblige us in point of duty: and therefore ought to influence us in practice. And if we are not influenced by them, we are to blame. Yea, ſo much to blame, you ſay, as to deſerve God's eternal wrath.

THER. It is certain, that all the perfection, goodneſs and excellency of the divine nature, cannot render God an amiable object to us, unleſs we know that he

(*d*) John iii. 36. (*e*) Pſal. vii. 11, 12. and xi. 5.
(*f*) Gal. iii. 10.
(*g*) MARSHAL *on Sanctification*, pag. 4.

loves us, and is our reconciled Father and Friend (*b*).

PAUL. The firſt queſtion is not, whether unregenerate ſinners, while dead in ſin, and enemies to God, do actually love God; but whether they ought not to love him. Whether the perfection, goodneſs and excellency of the divine nature is not a proper inducement, which renders it reaſonable and fit: Yea, which obliges; nay, infinitely obliges them to love God. I think you muſt grant this; for how elſe can the law be holy, juſt and good?

THER. If I ſhould grant that the perfection, goodneſs and excellency of the divine nature, does render it fit and reaſonable that we ſhould love God with all our hearts; yet it is impoſſible we ſhould love him, except firſt we know he loves us (*i*).

PAUL. If God is really a Being infinitely amiable in himſelf, and if it is fit and reaſonable we ſhould love him for the perfection, goodneſs and excellency of his nature, then there is, yea there can be, no difficulty in the way of the practice of this duty, but what lies in the badneſs of our hearts; and ſo, what we are to blame for. And therefore were our hearts right, we ſhould love him for his own lovelineſs

(*b*) MARSHAL *on Sanctification*, pag. 25.
(*i*) Ibid. p. 4, 25.

(*k*), and feel disposed to "glorify God AS "GOD;" as the very heathen ought to do, who never heard of his designs of mercy by Jesus Christ. Nay, all the heathen world are at this day and ever have been entirely without excuse, in not being thus affected towards the infinitely glorious God that made them: Yea, they are, for this, infinitely to blame; so as to deserve eternal wrath. And this is St *Paul*'s doctrine (*l*). Nay, this doctrine is fundamental to St *Paul*'s whole scheme of Religion. Overthrow this, and you will overthrow his whole scheme. For it is in this view, that he pronounces *Jew* and *Gentile*, even *the whole world*, to *stand guilty before God*, with their *mouths stopped*, *without* one *excuse* to make for themselves, though doomed to eternal destruction for not loving God with all their hearts. And so holy, just and good

(*k*) If our hearts were *right*, that is, were as they ought to be, were as the Law requires them to be, we should love God for his own loveliness: but in regeneration our hearts begin to be *right*; therefore then, even at that instant, we begin to love God for his own loveliness. For at that very instant, "when the vail "is taken from our hearts, we all with open face be-"hold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord," 2 *Cor.* iii. 18. Even the Law as "a Ministration of Death "and Condemnation, appears glorious," *ver.* 7, 9.— But every man is to blame, that his heart is not right. THERON pleads *impossibility*. St *Paul*, however, declares this kind of impossibility to be no excuse, *Rom.* i. 20, 21.

(*l*) Rom. i. 18—21.

does he eſteem his Law to be, as that it was needful the Son of God ſhould be "ſet "forth to be a propitiation, to declare "God's righteouſneſs, that he might be "juſt;" and not go counter to all good rules of government in pardoning and ſaving true penitents (*m*).

THER. The heathen were liable to deſtruction for their idolatries, and groſs immoralities.

PAUL. Yes, and alſo for their not "glorifying God as God. The wrath of "God, ſays the Apoſtle, is revealed from "heaven againſt all ungodlineſs:" Againſt the leaſt degree of diſreſpect towards the infinitely glorious Majeſty of heaven. The leaſt defect of love towards God, expoſes them to eternal deſtruction. This was the Apoſtle's conſtant doctrine, and a chief foundation of his whole ſcheme of principles (*n*).

THER. But the Gentiles had not ſo much as heard of the way of ſalvation by Chriſt; and muſt therefore, if their conſciences were awakened, be in fearful expectation of eternal wrath. But ſurely, it muſt be abſolutely impoſſible we ſhould love God, if we view him as diſpoſed to puniſh us in hell for ever. Yea, 'if I look on God as contrary 'to me, as one that hates me and will damn

(*m*) Rom. iii. 9—26. (*n*) Gal. iii. 10. Rom. i. 18. *and* chap. iii. 20.

'me, my own innate ſelf-love will breed 'hatred and heart-riſings againſt him, in 'ſpite of my heart (o).'

PAUL. That is, the divine Law is ſo intolerably cruel, that unleſs it is entirely ſet aſide as to us, we can never be pacified towards our Maker. We are in arms, in open rebellion, ſo virulent that we are full of 'hatred and heart-riſings,' in ſpite of all reſtraints. And we proclaim in the ſight of heaven our cauſe is ſo juſt, that we can never lay down our arms, fall at the foot of our Sovereign, and juſtify his Law; nay, we can never have one good thought of him, till firſt he ſet aſide his Law, remove the curſe, and grant us heaven upon our demands. Upon this condition we will forgive our Lawgiver for what is paſt, and be at peace for the future. On this foot we will lay down our arms, and be reconciled. Our firſt work therefore is, to believe that God doth give Chriſt and his ſalvation to us, and is become our reconciled Father and Friend. And this belief is to lay the foundation of all our Religion. But, O my dear THERON, ſuch a faith, growing out of ſuch an unhumbled, unſubdued heart as this, and a religion ariſing from ſuch a root, is all deluſion, if there be any ſuch thing in nature as deluſion (p).

(o) MARSHAL *on Sanctification*, p. 140.

(p) How righteous is it in the holy Sovereign of the world, to ſuffer ſuch a proud, ſelf-righteous ſinner, ſo ready

Beſides, tell me, my THERON, do you verily believe that God's diſpoſition to puniſh ſin, according to his holy Law, is a hateful diſpoſition? And do you verily believe, that God is an odious Being on this account? Or do you allow yourſelf to hate God for that, for which he appears infinitely amiable in the eyes of all the heavenly world (*q*)? Or is your heart a carnal, unregenerated heart, under the full power of enmity againſt God and his Law (*r*)? It is certain, what you ſay can never be juſtified. For if we have given God juſt cauſe to hate and puniſh us, by our wickedneſs, he is not the leſs lovely for being diſpoſed to do ſo, except he is the leſs lovely for being holy and juſt, that is, the leſs lovely for that, in which his lovelineſs in a great meaſure conſiſts.

You acknowledge the Law is holy, juſt and good, even as to the heathen world, who never heard of a Saviour. Therefore, it is not the grace of the Goſpel, that makes the Law good. The Law is older than the Goſpel, and was holy, juſt and good, before the Goſpel had a being. Yea, the Law had been for ever good, if Chriſt had never died. We were not the injured, abuſed party: Chriſt did not die to make ſatisfaction to us, to pacify our angry minds, and

ready to quarrel for a pardon, to be deluded with a falſe perſuaſion that he is pardoned! As he takes Satan's ſide againſt God and his Law; ſo God may juſtly leave him in Satan's power, 2 *Theſſ.* ii. 10—12.

(*q*) Rev. xix. 1—6. (*r*) Rom. viii. 7.

allay our 'hatred and heart-risings.' The grace of the Gospel is not granted to counterbalance the rigour of the Law, and to render God's plan of government justifiable; and so to sweeten the imbittered minds of God's enemies. God the Father was not a Tyrant, nor did his Son die a Sacrifice to Tyranny, to rescue his injured subjects from the severities of a cruel Law. Nay, if the Law in all its rigour had not been holy, just and good, antecedent to the gift of Christ; there had been no need God should ever give his Son to die, to answer its demands. It ought to have been repealed on *Adam*'s Fall, if too severe for an apostate race; and not honoured by the obedience and death of God's own Son. If this Law, as binding on a fallen world, is not in itself holy, just and good, glorious and amiable; the Gospel of Christ is all delusion. For it is impossible the Son of God should die to answer the demands of an unrighteous Law. It was wrong he should bear a curse in our stead, which we ourselves did not deserve. Such an appointment would have been inconsistent with all the divine perfections. If we view the Law as too severe, we must view the Gospel as not of God; if we will be consistent with ourselves (*s*).

(*s*) In Mr HERVEY's Ninth *Dialogue*, Vol. II. p. 16. Edit 1st. — ASPASIO having cited the words of the Apostle to prove his point; "As many as are of the "works of the Law, are under the curse," *Gal.* iii. 10. THERON objects, and ASPASIO answers, as follows:

Therefore, you and I muſt approve the Law as holy, juſt and good, glorious and amiable, with application to ourſelves, be-

THERON. 'Under the Curſe! becauſe our attempts 'to obey, tho' faithfully exerted, are attended with 'defects! Is not this unreaſonable and ſhocking? 'Unreaſonable, that the God of juſtice ſhould eſtabliſh 'a Law of ſuch conſummate perfection, as no child of 'Adam can, even with his utmoſt aſſiduity and care, 'fulfil? Shocking, that the God of mercy ſhould thun-'der out ſo ſevere a denunciation on the leaſt inadver-'tent breach, on every unavoidable failure? — This 'exceeds the relentleſs rigour of Draco, or the tyran-'nical impoſitions of the Egyptian taſk-maſters. Dra-'co is ſaid to have written his laws in blood: yet he 'never enacted ſuch inſtitutions, as were abſolutely too 'ſtrict and difficult to be obſerved. And though the 'Egyptian taſk-maſters inſiſted upon the full tale of 'bricks, without allowing the neceſſary proportion of 'ſtraw, yet the puniſhment they inflicted was incom-'parably leſs than everlaſting deſtruction.'

ASPAS. 'Had God Almighty's deſign in delivering 'his Law to fallen mankind, been to propound the 'means of their juſtification, your argument would have 'been valid, and your inference undeniable: but the 'ſupreme Legiſlator had a very different, a far more 'myſterious end; that is, he deſigned the Law to be "our ſchoolmaſter to bring us to Chriſt."— As ASPA-SIO goes on to ſhew, pag. 18—20. without once thinking, that if the Law, antecedent to a conſidera-tion of the interpoſition and death of Chriſt, was a cruel Law, like that which the Egyptian taſk-maſters urged, it ought to have been *repealed*. It was a diſ-honour to God to make it; and a greater diſhonour ſtill to appoint his Son to anſwer its demands. Nor is a *cruel Law* fit to be a *Schoolmaſter* in God's world, or ſuited to teach us any thing but to have *hard thoughts* of God. — And yet ASPASIO goes on to ſay, (P. 21.) 'Rather than the divine Law ſhould loſe its honours,

'Sodom

fore we can with all our hearts believe the Goſpel to be true. — And therefore, not a belief of God's Love to us, but a view of the infinite lovelineſs of the divine nature, muſt reconcile us to the divine Law. — Nor does this reaſoning attempt to prove an impoſſibility; but rather it demonſtrates the abſolute neceſſity of regeneration, as antecedent to the firſt act of faith; a doctrine your Author does not believe (*t*): And yet a doctrine plainly taught in ſcripture (*u*).

THER. Whatever we may do in ſpeculation when at eaſe, it is impoſſible under a lively ſenſe of the dreadfulneſs of eternal damnation, that we ſhould with application to ourſelves, approve in our very hearts the Law in all its rigour, as holy, juſt and

'*Sodom* and *Gomorrah* were laid in aſhes; the ancient 'world was deſtroyed with a deluge; the preſent frame 'of nature is deſtin'd to the flames; and all its unho-'ly inhabitants muſt be doomed to hell. Nay, rather 'than the *leaſt tittle* ſhould paſs unaccompliſhed, its 'Curſe has been executed upon God's own Son, and 'all its injunctions have been fulfilled in the perſon 'of Jeſus Chriſt.' — Very true; but does not all this demonſtrate, that the Law was *not* too ſevere and ſtrict, but perfectly "holy, juſt and good; a glorious Law?" 2 *Cor.* iii. 7. and that previous to the conſideration of the grace of the Goſpel. Had the Law been in itſelf *bad*, the death of Chriſt could not have made it *good*. Therefore it was not "God's deſign that the Law 'ſhould be our Schoolmaſter," that made the Law good: but it was in itſelf "holy, juſt and good;" and therefore it was *fit* to be our Schoolmaſter.

(*t*) MARSHAL *on Sanctification*, p. 135.

(*u*) John i. 12, 13.

good, as being really amiable and glorious in itſelf, till we know we are delivered from its curſe.

PAUL. If the Law in all its rigour, is not holy, juſt and good, glorious and amiable, before we are delivered from its curſe, it is a pity the beloved Son of God was obliged to die to anſwer its demands. It is a pity that a bad, a hateful Law ſhould be ſo infinitely honoured in the ſight of the whole intelligent ſyſtem—it is a pity God ever made it—a greater pity he ſuffered it to ſtand unrepealed—but the greateſt pity of all he gave his Son, his only begotten and well beloved Son, worſhipped by all the hoſts above, to die upon the ſhameful, painful croſs, to anſwer its demands. The Goſpel opens a ſad and gloomy ſcene to all the inhabitants of heaven, if the Law is not a glorious Law. You may, O my THERON, be raviſhed to think "Chriſt "died for you," let the Law be good or bad; but you can never acquieſce in the Goſpel-way of life by the blood of Chriſt, as honourable to God, till the Law firſt appears glorious in your eyes: but rather, (forgive me my Friend!) I ſay, you will rather feel the heart of an Infidel in your breaſt. You may be raviſhed to think "Chriſt died for you;" although you conceive of God the Father, as acting the part (heaven forbid the blaſphemy!) I ſay, as acting the part of a Tyrant in the whole

affair. But then, who can be ſo ſtupid as to believe the Son of God died a Sacrifice to Tyranny?—'If you are ſafe, you care 'not how.'—Is this your heart! If ſo, you are quite an Infidel.—Indeed this is the heart of every natural man; and it is equally true, that every natural man is under the reigning power of Infidelity (*w*).

(*w*) The external evidences of Chriſtianity may induce men to ſuch a belief of the Goſpel as that they *dare not* renounce it though they do not like it, but will not give a *heart-ſatisfying* conviction of its truth, ſo long as it ſeems to contain a ſyſtem of doctrines inconſiſtent with the moral perfections of God. But at firſt ſight it appears inconſiſtent with the moral perfections of God, to give his Son to die in our ſtead, to anſwer the demands of a Law in its own nature too ſevere. So long therefore as the Law appears in this light, no man can heartily believe the report of the Goſpel. *Gal.* iii. 10, 13. And this is one reaſon that all unregenerate men, who in ſcripture are conſidered as *enemies* to God's Law, *Rom.* viii. 7, 9. are repreſented as *not believing* the Goſpel, 1 *John* v. 1, *&c. &c.*—And this ſhews how our unbelief of the Goſpel ariſes from our *enmity* againſt God and his Law, *John* vii. 17. and chap. viii. 47. and ſo is truly criminal, *John* iii. 18. 19, 20, 21. And this accounts for the fearful apprehenſions of eternal deſtruction ſo common to awakened ſinners, who begin to ſee their ſtate by Law, but as yet do not "approve the Law as holy, juſt and "good." It is not ſtrange their fears run ſo high, when they do not believe the Goſpel to be true. And this accounts for the aptneſs of awakened ſinners to catch hold of falſe hopes, and to build on falſe foundations; as they are blind to the only true way of eſcape by Jeſus Chriſt. And this ſhews how prepoſterous it is to think to perſwade ſinners to come to Chriſt, and truſt in him, before they firſt approve the Law

"No man can ſay, that Jeſus is the Lord, "but by the holy Ghoſt. Whoſoever "believeth that Jeſus is the Chriſt, is born "of God (*x*)."

Wherefore the awakened ſinner, under a lively ſenſe of the dreadfulneſs of eternal damnation, with particular application to himſelf, muſt (through the regenerating influences of the holy Spirit) be brought to approve the Law in all its rigour, as holy, juſt and good, as being really amiable and

Law by which they ſtand condemned. They may be deluded by falſe ſuggeſtions and falſe joys, but they will never believe the Goſpel to be true with all their hearts, till they firſt approve the Law. Regeneration muſt be before faith, 1 *John* i. 12, 13. As to the unthinking multitude, who believe any thing they know not why, they may believe the Goſpel juſt as the *Mahometans* believe their *Alcoran*, merely becauſe their fathers believed it before them. But no thinking conſiderate man, who has a right doctrinal underſtanding of the Goſpel-plan, can ever believe it with all his heart, or cordially acquieſce in this way of life, till by ſeeing the glory of the God of glory, he approves the Law as "holy, juſt and good;" and ſo is prepared to ſee the wiſdom of God in the death of his Son —See Mr *Edwards on the Affections*, p. 182, to 199, on *the nature of Faith*. See alſo the ſame author on *the freedom of the Will*. In which all the objections of the *Arminians* againſt the divine Law, as requiring more of us than we *can* do, are ſapped at the foundation. See p. 159, to 177. See alſo the author's *True Religion delineated*, wherein his ſentiments relative to the nature of *Law* and *Goſpel* may be ſeen more at large, and objections anſwered. As alſo his Sermon on *Gal.* iii. 24.

(*x*) 1 Cor. xii. 3. 1 John v. 1. Rom. x. 9. 1 John iv. 15.

glorious in itſelf, before he can ſo much as believe (in ſcripture-ſenſe) the Goſpel to be true. Till this, every man has the heart of an Infidel. Yea, till this, every man has the heart of an enemy to the Goſpel (rightly underſtood) as to the Law.

Here, my dear THERON, here lies the great difficulty of embracing Chriſtianity. This ſets the world againſt it. Their hearts hate it, and their wits and pens are in a manner conſtantly employed to baniſh it from the face of the earth. All the chief errors in Chriſtendom grow up from a ſecret hatred of God's holy Law. But all their elaborate volumes are confuted with this ſingle ſentence: 'Chriſt loved the Law in 'all its rigour, and felt it was holy, juſt 'and good, or he would never have left 'his Father's boſom to die upon the croſs, 'to anſwer its demands.' Antinomians, Neonomians, Arminians, *&c.* muſt all give up their various ſchemes, or, if they will be conſiſtent with themſelves, go off into open Infidelity. For the Law in all its rigour is right, and glorious too, or the Son of God had never died to anſwer its demands (*y*).

(*y*) If Infidels triumph to ſee profeſſed Chriſtians advance ſuch abſurd and inconſiſtent ſchemes, they may do well to remember, that the very ſpirit of enmity to God and his Law, which produces theſe ſad effects among profeſſed Chriſtians, hath led *them* ſtill further, even to give up divine Revelation itſelf.

Perhaps,

THER. But, Sir, is not what ſome ſay, agreeable to ſcripture, reaſon and experience, *viz.* that as our enmity againſt God ariſes from conceiving him to be our

Perhaps, *firſt*, the *Arminian* ſpirit wrought in their hearts, and they were, in their own fancy, infallibly certain that *it is not juſt that God ſhould require more of his creatures than they* can *do, and then damn them for* not *doing*. The *next* ſtep, they denied the *Atonement of Chriſt*, and commenced *Socinians*; for it appeared abſolutely incredible, that *the Son of God ſhould die to anſwer the demands of an unjuſt Law*. But, *laſtly*, when on further conſideration they find, that the Old and New Teſtament both join to teach, that "curſed is "every man that continueth not in all things written "in the Book of the Law, to do them," *Deut.* xxvii. 26. *Gal.* iii. 10. and find that it is aſſerted, that "Chriſt "was made a Curſe for us, to redeem us from this "very curſe," *ver.* 13. even "from the wrath to "come," 1 *Theſſ.* i. 10. and perceive that the doctrine of Atonement is ſo univerſally inwrought into the whole of divine Revelation that it cannot poſſibly be ſever'd from it; and yet conſider, that if Chriſt died to anſwer the demands of the Law, the Law muſt be ſuppoſed to be "holy, juſt and good," in all its rigour; a point they never can believe: Therefore, to extricate themſelves out of all difficulties at once, (bold, daring rebels to God that they be!) notwithſtanding all the infallible evidences that God has given to its truth, they run the dreadful venture to give up the *Bible* itſelf. They had rather turn profeſſed Infidels, than own the divine Law to be holy, juſt and good. And then, ſo inconſiſtent are they, they pretend to make the *Law of Nature* their only rule; not conſidering that their *enmity* to the Law of nature, the true and real Law of nature, hath driven them this dreadful length. — "The Fool ſaith in his heart, "There is no God." Did mankind really believe that there is a God of infinite glory, they could not but

be

enemy, ſo we can never be reconciled to him, till we firſt ſee and are perſuaded that loves us (z)?

PAUL. With your leave, Sir, I will venture to affirm, that this ſcheme is contrary to ſcripture, reaſon, and the univerſal experience of all true ſaints. — As to the experience of all true ſaints, we have that, in the plaineſt language, deſcribed by an inſpired writer; "We all with open face, "beholding, as in a glaſs, the glory of the "Lord, are changed into the ſame image (a)." A ſight of the glory of God is what moves us to love him. Love to God is that image of God we are changed into. The image of God chiefly conſiſts in Love, as all own. And this is produced by a ſenſe of God's glory, as the inſpired Apoſtle affirms. — Beſides, this ſcheme is contrary to the whole tenor of ſcripture, which every where teaches, that thoſe who are enemies to God, are actually in a ſtate of *condemnation* (b) and of *wrath* (c) and never can, nor will

be convinced that they are really under infinite obligations to love him, as ſuch, with all their hearts; and that the leaſt defect deſerves his everlaſting wrath. But a fallen world are *dead* to God, blind to his beauty, and enemies to his Law; as all their reaſonings and all their conduct join to prove. So that *Atheiſm* is the root of all errors; and *enmity* to God and his Law ſhuts our eyes againſt the truth, and gives Infidelity a reigning power over our hearts.

(z) MARSHAL *on Sanctification*, p. 25—27, 140.
(a) 2 Cor. iii. 18. (b) John iii. 18.
(c) John iii. 36.

be received into the divine favour, till they *repent* and are *converted* (*d*, till they *turn to God* (*e*, and are *reconciled* to him through Jeſus Chriſt (*f*). And indeed, a true juſtifying faith compriſes all this in its very nature, in its very firſt act.—Beſides, if one ſhould be ſo deluded, as to believe God was reconciled to him, while impenitent, and out of Chriſt, this belief would not, could not, bring him to love God. It is true, ſuch an one might, like the carnal *Iſraelites* at the ſide of the red-ſea, be full of joy and love, ariſing merely from ſelf-love. A kind of love, which has in it nothing of the nature of true love to God: but is conſiſtent with a reigning enmity againſt him.

THER. But if our enmity againſt God ariſes from conceiving him to be our enemy, remove the cauſe, and the effect will ceaſe. If we view him as our reconciled Father and Friend, the occaſion of our enmity being removed, our enmity will ceaſe, and we ſhall naturally love him.

PAUL. Right, THERON, you ſay true. If that be the only cauſe of our enmity, this will effectually remove it. Nor ſhall we need to be *born again* (*g*), or to have any new principle of *divine life* communicated to us (*b*). But from the Principles

(*d*) Acts iii. 19.
(*e*) Prov. i. 23, 24. Ezek. xxxiii. 11.
(*f*) 2 Cor. v. 20. Luke xiii. 3, 5.
(*g*) John iii. 3. (*b*) Ver. 6. Eph. ii. 5.

of nature we may love God thus (*i*), and the regenerating, ſanctifying influences of the holy Spirit will be wholly needleſs. The vail need not to be taken from our hearts, that we may behold the "glory of God *k*)." Only let God declare that he loves us, and all is done.—And if he was our enemy before we turned enemies to him, it ſeems proper and meet he ſhould declare himſelf to be reconciled firſt. Be ſure, as this will put an end to the whole controverſy between him and us, and ſet all things right. And one would think, that the God of Peace would not be backward to make ſuch a declaration, in the moſt explicit manner, to all the human race, and that without the interpoſition of a Mediator, if indeed he became an enemy to the human kind before we turned enemies to him.—But if the human kind, without the leaſt provocation, turned enemies firſt, and without any reaſon revolted from their rightful Lord and Sovereign, and when God infinitely deſerved their higheſt Love, joined in open rebellion with Satan, God's avowed foe; and if this our infinitely unreaſonable enmity is now the reſult of the very temper of our whole heart, even of a fixed contrariety of nature to God, his Law and Government, which yet are faultleſs, yea, perfectly holy, juſt and good (*l*). It is infinitely unreaſonable,

(*i*) Matt. v. 46. (*k*) 2 Cor. iii. 18.
(*l*) Rom. vii. 12. *and* viii. 7.

that God ſhould forgive us, till we acknowledge this is is the caſe, and approve his Law, by which we ſtand condemned, in the very bottom of our hearts (*m*). Nor, till we do this, can we poſſibly look to God through Jeſus Chriſt for pardon, as abſolutely of mere free grace. Without which, the righteous Monarch of the univerſe has declared, we ſhall never be forgiven (*n*). —But how contrary to reaſon is it, to ſuppoſe, that God became enemy to the human kind firſt, and that all our enmity ariſes from conceiving him to be our enemy, as though ſome fault were originally on God's ſide, before we revolted from him? And ſo if he would now but become our Friend and love us, we ſhould love him without any more ado! — What need then of the death of his Son? Or what need of the ſanctifying influences of his Spirit? If he was our enemy firſt, he may well, without a Mediator, declare himſelf reconciled. And this will put an end to the whole controverſy. A ſhocking ſcheme of Religion this! But ſhocking as it is, and as reluctant as you may be to own it in this ſhocking dreſs; yet you muſt, my THERON, adhere to it, if you would be conſiſtent with yourſelf, or elſe give up your darling point. For if we are enemies to God, in the temper of our minds, previous to one thought of his be-

(*m*) Luke xviii. 13.
(*n*) Rom. iii. 24. Mark xvi. 16.

ing our enemy, a perſuaſion of his Love, it is ſelf-evident, will never reconcile us to him.

THER. Underſtand me right. If we were to loveGod primarily and chiefly for his own excellencies, a mere perſuaſion of his Love to us, I own, would not be ſufficient to bring us to this. But you are ſenſible, Sir, that many look on this notion of loving God for himſelf, as a mere chimera.—What makes God appear lovely to us, is a belief, an aſſured perſuaſion, that our ſins are blotted out; and that God is our reconciled Father and Friend, and altogether Love to us (*o*).

PAUL. But what warrant has a chriſtleſs ſinner, while an enemy to God, to believe that his ſins are blotted out? Or if he does believe ſo, and is raviſhed with his deluſion, how can you prove this raviſhment is of the nature of true holineſs? The devil can thus delude and raviſh a poor ſinner: But has Satan power to beget divine grace and real holineſs in the heart!

THER. But if the word of God is full on my ſide, this muſt determine the point.

PAUL. Amen! I join iſſue here with all my heart. Nor ſhall any other writings ever determine, for me, any of the doctrines of Religion.

THER. It is expreſly written, as the experience of all the ſaints in the apoſtolic

(*o*) MARSHAL *on Sanctification*, p. 266, 140.

age, in 1 *John* iv. 16. "We have known "and believed the Love that God hath to "us." And it follows in verſe 19. "We "love him becauſe he firſt loved us." In theſe two verſes our whole ſcheme is expreſſed in the plaineſt manner.

PAUL. Yes and it is as expreſly written in *James* ii. 21, "Was not our Father *Abraham* "juſtified by works?" And it is added with reſpect to all good men, verſe 24. "Ye ſee "then, how that by works a man is juſtified, "and not by faith only." And in theſe two verſes our whole ſcheme, ſay the Arminians, is expreſſed in the plaineſt manner.

THER. We are not to be carried away by the mere ſound of words, in a ſingle text of ſcripture, or two, to notions contrary to the whole tenor of the ſacred volume. This is the way of Heretics, who thus "wreſt "the ſcriptures to their own deſtruction(*p*)." We are rather, by viewing the context, and comparing ſcripture with ſcripture, to ſearch for the true meaning of the inſpired writer. My dear ASPASIO has ſet thoſe words of St *James* in their proper light, and proved that they are not at all to the purpoſe of the Arminians (*q*). And indeed, I wonder how men that ever ſaw their own righteouſneſs to be as filthy rags, ſhould ever think of perverting the Apoſtle's words to a meaning, it is plain, he never intended.

(*p*) 2 Pet. iii. 16. (*q*) Vol. I. p. 268.

PAUL. You ſpeak well, my dear THERON. And I wonder how men, who are daily "with open face beholding, as in a glaſs, "the glory of the Lord, and are changed "into the ſame image from glory to "glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord," ſhould ever think of putting ſuch a ſenſe on thoſe words of St *John*. A ſenſe, it is plain, he never intended, neither came it into his heart. Indeed, I hope ſome mens hearts are more orthodox than their heads. However, let that be as it will; for it does not belong to you nor me to judge the ſtate of mens ſouls; God only knows their hearts: With God we leave them: Yet their notions of Religion we may examine, compare with ſcripture, and paſs judgment upon. Here we have a good right to judge.—Wherefore, let us, obſerving the rules of interpreting ſcripture, which you have hinted, rules which all parties muſt allow to be good; let us, I ſay, impartially examine thoſe words of the Apoſtle, in 1 *John* iv. 16, 19. which you juſt now referred to, as clearly expreſſing your whole ſcheme.—Here, my dear THERON, here is the Bible; take it; and read the Epiſtle through; and when you have done, tell me—who are they, what is the character of the men, who uſe this confident language? "We have known "and believed the Love that God hath to "us."—Were they ſaints, or ſinners? Did they

they know they were the children of God, or were they doubtful? Did they know they were in a good eſtate by being conſcious of ſanctifying operations in their own breaſts?

THER. I have read the Epiſtle — I grant they knew they were the "children of "God," and "heirs of eternal glory." They did not merely hope this was the caſe; but they were certain of it: They KNEW it (*chap.* iii. 1, 2.) And they knew it by ſuch evidences as theſe. Becauſe they *knew* God, *loved* him, and *kept his commands*, (*chap.* ii. 3, 4, 5.) imitated the example of Chriſt (*ver.* 6.) loved the brethren (*ver.* 10.) as bearing the image of God (*chap.* v. 1.) had overcome the prince of darkneſs (*chap.* ii. *ver.* 13.) were weaned from the world (*ver.* 15.) had ſuch divine illuminations, as enabled them to underſtand, and confirmed them in the belief of the great doctrines of Religion, ſo that it was impoſſible they ſhould be ſeduced (*ver.* 19—27.) purified themſelves after the pattern of Chriſt (*chap.* iii. 3.) lived in no ſin (*ver.* 6.) yea, could not live in ſin (*ver.* 9.) made ſanctification their criterion of a good eſtate (*ver.* 10.) looked upon all that were without it as children of the devil (*ver.* 10.) they were governed by divine grace in their conduct towards their brethren (*ver.* 18, 19.) and made it their buſineſs to do the things which were pleaſing in the ſight of God (*ver.* 22.) in a word, they were conſcious to

the ſanctifying operations of God's Spirit, which dwelt in them (*ver.* 24.) *&c. &c.*

PAUL. Now tell me, O my THERON, might not theſe men, on good grounds, and with a ſafe warrant ſay, "We have known "and believed the love that God hath to "us?" They knew they were the children of God, and entitled to eternal glory. They knew they were of the number of the elect, the ſheep for whom Chriſt died with an abſolute deſign to ſave. They knew all this, not by believing it without any evidence from ſcripture, ſenſe or reaſon; but they knew all this by evidences which paſs for infallible in the court of heaven: Evidences, which they knew, and we know, the Judge will pronounce to be good and valid at the great day. Now tell me, O my THERON, if theſe men knew that God loved them, how can that prove, that chriſtleſs, impenitent ſinners, enemies to God, unreconciled, can know it too? Theſe men had good evidence for what they believed; but chriſtleſs ſinners have no evidence that God loves them, or deſigns to ſave them, 'from ſcripture, ſenſe, or reaſon;' as the celebrated Mr MARSHAL is obliged to own (*r*).

THER. But the Apoſtle ſays, "We love "him becauſe he firſt loved us." Which plainly ſuppoſes, they knew God loved them before they loved him.

(*r*) MARSHAL *on Sanctification*, p. 173.

PAUL. If the Apoſtle and all thoſe apoſtolic ſaints ſhould join to declare, they never underſtood the matter ſo, this would quite ſatisfy you. But which is altogether equivalent, they all agreed to make this their ſteady maxim: "He that committeth ſin is of the devil" (*chap.* iii. 8,9,10.) But antecedent to the firſt act of grace they had only committed ſin. Every act was a ſinful act before the firſt gracious and holy act. And therefore, according to their own rule, they were not the children of God, but the children of the devil; till they had performed, at leaſt, one act of grace. And until they knew they had performed an act grace, according to their own rule, they could not know their ſtate was changed for the better. But in the firſt act of ſaving grace, the ſinner's heart is really reconciled to God through Jeſus Chriſt. So that we begin to love God before we know that he begins to love us. "Repent and be converted," not becauſe your ſins are already, but that they "may "be blotted out (*t*)."

THER. This is not agreeable to my experience. (1.) I had the love of God, as a reconciled God, manifeſted to my ſoul. (2.) Hereupon I believed that God was my reconciled God and Father. (3.) And ſo I loved God becauſe he firſt loved me. And indeed it is plain the Apoſtle taught, that

(*t*) Acts iii. 19.

God loves us before we love him. "Not "that we loved God, but that he loved "us (*u*)." He loved us before we loved him.

PAUL. But think a little, O my THERON! You do not maintain that a ſinner is actually entitled to the Love of God, as his reconciled God and Father, before he believes in Chriſt. This is beyond all diſpute inconſiſtent with the whole tenor of the Goſpel. For unbelievers are condemned, and under the "wrath of God (*x*)." "We are juſtified "by faith (*y*)," and not before faith.

THER. As to Faith and Juſtification, I chooſe to defer theſe ſubjects to another time. But pray tell me; how do you underſtand theſe words?

PAUL. As to the Love of God towards us. There is, (1.) Electing Love, whereby God "choſe us in Chriſt to ſalvation before "the foundation of the world (*z*)." (2.) Redeeming Love towards the elect, ſpoken of in 1 *John* iv. 9, 10. "He loved us, "and ſent his Son to be the Propitiation "for our ſins." (3.) There is the ſovereign Grace and Love of God, which is exerciſed in awakening, convincing and converting elect ſinners. (*a*) "God, who is rich "in mercy, for his great Love wherewith "he loved us, even when we were dead in

(*u*) 1 John iv. 10.
(*y*) Rom. v. 1.
(*a*) Eph. ii. 4, 5.
(*x*) John iii. 18, 36.
(*z*) Eph. i. 4.

"ſins, hath quickened us together with "Chriſt. By grace are ye ſaved." (4.) There is the Love of God, as a reconciled Father, towards thoſe that are converted, and become his children through Jeſus Chriſt. (*b*) "He that hath my command-"ments and keepeth them, he it is that "loveth me: And he that loveth me, ſhall "be loved of my Father, and I will love "him, and manifeſt myſelf to him. (*c*) "My Father will love him, and we will "come unto him, and make our abode "with him. (*d*) There is therefore now "no condemnation to them which are "in Chriſt Jeſus, who walk not after the "fleſh, but after the Spirit."—Now the Love of God, as a reconciled Father, none enjoy but thoſe who are already the children of God; and they enjoy it, as our bleſſed Saviour teaches, in conſequence of their "loving him and keeping his commands." And ſuch was the ſtate of the ſaints the Apoſtle *John* is ſpeaking of. They knew, that they were the children of God, and that they ſhould be ſaved. And they lived daily in a ſenſe of God's love, as their reconciled Father; for they loved God and kept his commands.

'But how came we to be in this bleſſed 'and happy ſtate?' Might they ſay,—'Once

(*b*) John xiv. 21. (*c*) John xiv. 23.
(*d*) Rom. viii. 1.

'we were dead in ſin, and enemies to God: 'Now with open face we behold, as in a 'Glaſs, the glory of the Lord, and love 'him, and rejoice in his love. Once we 'were under condemnation and wrath: 'Now children of God, and heirs of eter-'nal glory. "Behold what manner of love "the Father hath beſtowed upon us, that "we ſhould be called the ſons of God!" 'And whence is all this? Not from any 'goodneſs in us; but of God's mere ſovereign 'grace! He loved us before we loved him; 'yea, before the foundation of the world! 'And we now love him becauſe he firſt loved 'us. Yea, we never ſhould have loved him, 'had not he firſt loved us, and redeemed 'us by the blood of his Son, and quickned 'us when dead in ſin by his holy Spirit, and 'opened our eyes to behold his glory and 'beauty. Wherefore, ſeeing God is ſo 'infinite in his love and goodneſs towards 'us, let us imitate him, and love one ano-'ther.'

Pray, my dear THERON, take your Bible once more, and read from the ſeventh to the twenty firſt verſe, in the fourth chapter of the firſt Epiſtle of *John*. Read the whole Paragraph critically, and you may eaſily ſee, that this is the ſum of the Apoſtle's rea-ſonings. "Beloved, let us love one ano-'ther. This is the duty I urge you to: 'and this is the argument I uſe: "God is

"Love." 'And if we are born of God, 'if we are made partakers of his nature, 'we ſhall love our brother. If we do not 'love our brother, our pretences to Rege-'neration are a lie. If we do love our 'brother, we are born of God; for God 'is Love (*e*). That God is love, is plain 'from the work of our redemption by 'Chriſt. That the benevolence, love and 'goodneſs of the divine nature is ſelf-mov-'ing, is plain, becauſe there was no good-'neſs in us to move him to give his Son 'to die for us. For we did not love God. 'We were enemies. God firſt loved us. 'Yea, if God had not pitied us in our loſt 'ſtate, and redeemed us, and brought us 'to know him, we ſhould never have loved 'him. We love him now, but we never 'ſhould have done ſo, had not he firſt 'loved, redeemed, and converted us. Where-'fore, full of gratitude, we love him becauſe 'he firſt loved us. And as the goodneſs of 'the divine nature is thus ſelf-moving, and 'as God's heart is ſo full of benevolence 'and love, and as we partake of the very 'ſame nature by our new birth; ſo we 'ſhould exerciſe it conſtantly in loving 'our brethren. The goodneſs of the di-'vine nature, as manifeſt in our redemp-'tion, which is continually before our eyes,

(*e*) *See* 1 John iv. 7,8,11,12,13,16,20,21.

'and its beauty which conſtantly affects our 'hearts, ſhould change us into the ſame 'image, and make us full of love to our 'brethren (*f*).'

THER. If, by the beauty of the divine nature, you only mean, that God appears lovely, merely becauſe he loves us, I can underſtand you; and can love God on this account. But when you ſpeak of loving God for himſelf, I know not what you mean, nor how it is poſſible for any to love God on this foot.

PAUL. There is an eſſential difference between being charmed with the beauty of the divine goodneſs, and being raviſhed merely to think that God loves me. The one will infallibly change us into the divine image, agreeable to St *Matt.* v. 44, 45, 48. the other will never raiſe us higher than to the Publican's ſtandard (*g*).

Beſides, my dear THERON, tell me; do you verily believe, that it is more to God's honour to be your particular friend, than it is to be by NATURE GOD? Does his friendſhip to you make him ſhine brighter, than all the INFINITE GLORIES OF HIS ETERNAL GODHEAD? And is he more worthy to be loved and worſhipped becauſe he loves you, than for his own REAL DIVINITY? Or, as the Papiſts canonize ſaints for their extraordinary attachment to the Roman Church, and then pay them religious worſhip; ſo,

(*f*) 1 John iv. 7—21. (*g*) Matt. v. 46, 47.

do you deify God, for being your particular friend, and give him divine worſhip merely on this account: but for which you would be full of 'hatred and heart-riſings againſt 'him?' We uſe to think divine love and worſhip ought by no means to be paid to a mere creature, how kind ſoever to us. But if you leave DIVINITY, if you leave the GLORY OF THE DIVINE MAJESTY as he is in himſelf, out of the account; and love and worſhip him merely for his Love to you; and make him your God, merely for that; and ſo pay him divine worſhip, not becauſe he is by NATURE GOD, but becauſe he is your particular friend; how will you free yourſelf from the guilt of Idolatry? To be ſure, you are ſo far from paying a proper regard to real divinity, that you ſhew yourſelf quite blind to his beauty and glory, and ſtupid to that which charms all the heavenly world. And in their eyes, you muſt appear in a very ſelfiſh, impious, contemptible light, in your higheſt raptures.

Had *Nicaulis*, the Queen of *Sheba*, on her return from King *Solomon*'s court, in all her converſation, dwelt only on the royal bounty which he gave her (*b*); and expreſſed her love to him on this account alone, wondering how any man of ſenſe could talk of the fine and charming accom-

(*b*) 1 Kings x. 13.

pliſhments of the King, and what they meant by loving him primarily and chiefly on the foot of his own perſonal merit; would not thoſe gentlemen, who had been her attendants in her tour to *Jeruſalem*, have been tempted to look upon her as a perſon of no taſte, that the fine and charming accompliſhments of even *Solomon*, in all his glory, could not touch her heart. And I dare ſay, her name would not have been mentioned in the Jewiſh hiſtory, unleſs with infamy. But what was *Solomon*'s glory, compared with the glory of the King of the whole univerſe!

What would the Queen of *Iſrael* have thought, had the daughters of *Jeruſalem* ſaid unto her, "What is thy beloved more "than another beloved, O thou faireſt "among women?" Would ſhe not have ſoon replied, with the fervour of an ardent lover? "My Beloved is white and ruddy, "the chiefeſt among ten thouſand; yea, he "is altogether lovely (*i*)." And have not the regenerate infinitely more reaſon to adopt this language? For as natural men have by nature a taſte to the beauties of the natural world; ſo ſpiritual men have by grace a taſte to the beauties of the moral world. As King *Solomon* appeared exceeding glorious to the Queen of *Sheba*; ſo the Lord Jehovah who ſits on a "throne high and "lifted up," as the thrice holy Monarch

(*i*) Cant. v. 9, 10, 16.

of the univerſe, appears exceeding glorious, not only to angels in heaven, but to ſaints on earth (*k*). And they are all ready, in the language of the Queen of *Sheba*, to ſay, "Happy are thy men, happy are theſe "thy ſervants, which ſtand continually be"fore thee (*l*)." The infinite amiableneſs of God, as he is in himſelf, is the chief ſource of the refined joys of the heavenly world. To behold ſuch a God, to love and be beloved by him, is the heaven of heaven itſelf. And the more exalted his glory and beauty, the ſweeter their love and joy. His being what he is in himſelf, ſo infinitely deſirable, renders it ſo infinitely happifying to them, to enjoy him for ever, as their own (*m*).

THER. Perhaps there may be more in what you plead for than I have been wont to think. And as I deſign fully to conſider theſe things, that I may be under the beſt advantages to make up a right judgment, pray point out ſome of the chief differences between theſe two kinds of Love to God.

PAUL. (1.) If I love God for himſelf, God, even God himſelf is the object beloved: And the act by me performed is properly an act of love to God. If I love God merely becauſe he loves me, I am the object really beloved: And the act is properly an act of ſelf-love. (2.) The one

(*k*) Iſai vi 3. 2 Cor. iii. 18.
(*l*) 1 Kings x. 8. (*m*) Pſal. lxxiii. 25.

ſuppoſes the glory and amiableneſs of the divine nature is really ſeen: The other may be where the heart is wholly blind to this kind of beauty, as it does not ariſe from a ſenſe of God's amiableneſs, but altogether from ſelfiſh conſiderations. (3.) If God is loved for himſelf, the whole of God's Law and Government will alſo be loved, as in themſelves beautiful, holy, juſt and good; a tranſcript and image of God's nature. If God is loved merely becauſe he loves me, I ſhall be reconciled to God's Law and Government, only as conſidering myſelf ſafe from the ſtroke of divine juſtice. And I ſhall be reconciled to God's decrees, only as conſidering them in my favour. Not really caring what becomes of the reſt of my fellow-men, I ſhall pretend to like God's plan of Government as being ſafe myſelf; but for which, I ſhould, as your Author expreſſes it, be full of 'hatred and heart-'riſings in ſpite of my heart (*n*).' If God is loved for himſelf, every thing, which bears his image, will, for the ſame reaſon, be loved, as being in itſelf lovely, as reſembling the ſtandard of true beauty: But otherwiſe, all my love towards all other things of a religious nature, will be merely ſelfiſh. For inſtance, I ſhall love the children of God merely on ſelfiſh accounts; as, becauſe they love me, belong to my party, &c. So the hypocritical *Galatians* once

(*n*) MARSHAL *on Sanctification*, p. 24, 25, 140.

loved St *Paul*, as they thought he had been the means of their converſion; but when he was afterwards obliged to tell them ſome truths which they diſreliſhed, their love grew cold; yea, they rather inclined to join with the falſe teachers, his avowed enemies, who were conſtantly endeavouring to undermine that ſcheme of Religion which was dearer to him than his life. This proved, they never really loved *Paul* himſelf; who ſtill continued the ſame he was before. So the *Iſraelites* ſeemed to love God much at the ſide of the red-ſea, while they thought he loved them; but the waters of *Marah* ſoon brought them to different feelings. (4.) If God is loved for himſelf, it will be natural to imitate him, and delight to pleaſe him. For we always love to imitate and pleaſe thoſe who are really dear to us, and their "commands are not grievous (*o*)." But you know the character of the men "who "ſang God's praiſe, but ſoon forgat his "works. And forty years long was I "grieved with this generation (*p*)." They were much engaged to have themſelves pleaſed; but cared not what became of God's honour, when they were croſſed.—(5.) If God is loved for himſelf, then the enjoyment of God will be our higheſt happineſs. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? "And there is none upon earth that I deſire

(*o*) 1 John v. 3. (*p*) Pſal. cvi. 12, 13.—xcv. 10.

" beſides thee (*q*)." Whereas, if we love God only in a firm perſuaſion of his Love to us, as himſelf cannot be our portion, ſo we ſhall naturally ſeek reſt elſewhere. For nothing can be a portion to our ſouls, which is not loved for itſelf. The man that marries merely for money, cannot expect to find that delight and ſatisfaction in his companion, which he might in a perſon agreeable to his taſte. And no wonder he abſents himſelf from her company, and contrives excuſes to juſtify himſelf. Wherefore, (6) If God is loved for himſelf, as there is thereby a foundation laid for a conformity to him in the temper of our minds, and a life of communion with him; ſo hereby it may be diſcovered, that we, thus bearing his image, are really his children. And ſo an aſſurance of our good eſtate may be obtained from our ſanctification; which on the other ſcheme never can, if we will be honeſt to our own ſouls. "As well may the "ruſh grow without mire, and the flag with-"out water;" yea, as well may you build a a "cathedral on the ſtalk of a tulip," ſays your ASPASIO (*r*), as one in your ſcheme maintain Aſſurance from a conſciouſneſs of his own ſanctification.

Here, my dear ASPASIO, the converſation ſtopped. I ſat ſilent — all my thoughts turned inward — 'O my ſoul,' ſaid I to my-

(*q*) Pſal. lxxiii. 25.

(*r*) Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 360, 362.

ſelf, 'this is my very caſe. My ſanctifica-
'tion has for a long time been no more to
'be ſeen than the ſtars at noon. I have
'found by ſad experience, no aſſurance
'could poſſibly be obtained this way. To
'ſeek Aſſurance by marks and ſigns of grace,
'only cheriſhes my doubts, and increaſes
'my perplexity. And what if this is indeed
'the very reaſon, that really I never had
'any true Grace!' I was ſhocked—my
'heart recoiled—'O dreadful! an heir of
'hell, after all my high raiſed hopes!'

Thus I ſat ſilent ſeveral minutes—quite loſt in ſelf-reflection—till PAULINUS began again to ſpeak. 'I muſt diſmiſs theſe ſub-
'jects at preſent, ſaid I, and retire. Your
'thoughts on the remaining points, I hope
'to hear at a more convenient ſeaſon.' PAU-LINUS replied, 'When you pleaſe, Sir, I am
'at your ſervice.'—'To morrow-evening I
'will wait upon you,' ſaid I. After he had expreſſed many kind wiſhes for my good, and I had aſked his prayers, I retired to my cloſet. And, O my ASPASIO, you may eaſily gueſs how I ſpent the night. For "the
"wicked are like the troubled ſea, when it
"cannot reſt, whoſe waters caſt up mire
"and dirt."

DIALOGUE II.

Tueſday Evening, *Dec.* 12, 1758.

I Returned at the appointed time. And, after ſome agreeable converſation on general ſubjects, I introduced the ſecond Queſtion.—But PAULINUS inſiſted I ſhould tell my opinion firſt—which I did, in the very words of the beſt writers I had ſeen. Thus we begun.

PAULINUS. Pray, tell me exactly, what juſtifying Faith is, in your opinion?

THERON. 'It is a real perſuaſion in my 'heart, that Jeſus Chriſt is mine, and that 'I ſhall have life and ſalvation by him; 'that whatſoever Chriſt did for the redemp-'tion of mankind, he did it for me.'—'Faith is an hearty aſſurance, that our ſins 'are freely forgiven us in Chriſt.'—'Juſti-'fying Faith hath for the ſpecial object of 'it, forgiveneſs of ſins. A man doth not 'believe that his ſins are forgiven him al-'ready, before the act of believing; but that 'he ſhall have forgiveneſs of ſins. In the 'very act of juſtification, he believes his 'ſins are forgiven him; and ſo receives for-

'giveneſs (*s*).'—'Faith is a real perſuaſion 'that the bleſſed Jeſus hath ſhed his blood 'for me, fulfilled all righteouſneſs in my 'ſtead: that through his great atonement 'and glorious obedience, he has purchaſed 'even for my ſinful ſoul, reconciliation 'with God, ſanctifying grace, and all ſpi-'ritual bleſſings.' And the language of Faith is this; 'Pardon is mine; Grace is 'mine; Chriſt and all his ſpiritual Bleſſings 'are mine.' 'God has freely loved me; 'Chriſt has graciouſly died for me; and the 'Holy Ghoſt will aſſuredly ſanctify me in 'the belief, the appropriating belief, of 'theſe precious truths.'—This appropriating and taking home to myſelf the bleſſings of the Goſpel is of the eſſence of faith (*t*).—'It is not a perſuaſion that we have already 'received Chriſt and his ſalvation, or that 'we have been already brought into a 'ſtate of grace: But only that God is 'pleaſed graciouſly to give Chriſt and his

(*s*) *Marrow of Modern Divinity*, with Notes, p. 158, 273. — Note, *Wendelinus* is the Author of the laſt mentioned definition of faith, who is one of the authorities Mr HERVEY refers to, *Dialogues*, p 315. And as this definition ſeems to have been made with care, and to be very exact, ſo it is worthy of particular attention. — My ſins are not forgiven — but I believe they are forgiven — and ſo receive forgiveneſs; that is, I knew it was not true — but I believed it to be true — and ſo it became true. Which exactly anſwers to the account Mr MARSHAL gives of faith. Of which more preſently.

(*t*) Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 296, 362, 345, 315.

'ſalvation unto us, to bring us into a 'ſtate of grace (*u*).' To ſum up all in a word: Faith is a perſuaſion, that I am one for whom Chriſt died, with a deſign to ſave; that God is reconciled to me, loves me, and will ſave me. And all this is believed by the direct act of Faith, antecedent to any reflection (*w*).

PAUL. O my THERON, be you not miſtaken? Is not Faith uſually called *coming* to Chriſt, *receiving* Chriſt, *truſting* in Chriſt, *believing on* Chriſt, *flying to* Chriſt, &c?

THER. It is. But this is an after-act, and is built upon the former. *Firſt*, I believe that Pardon, Grace, Chriſt and all his ſpiritual Bleſſings are mine: And then I truſt I ſhall aſſuredly be ſaved by Chriſt.—Firſt, I believe that Chriſt died for me in particular, and that God is my God; and this encourages me to come to Chriſt and truſt in him. If I did not know that Chriſt loves me, I ſhould not dare to truſt in him (*x*). Wherefore, in the firſt direct act of Faith, I believe that God 'is reconciled to 'me (*y*), that Chriſt has 'reſcued me from 'hell,' and 'eſtabliſhed my title to all the 'bleſſings included in the promiſes (*z*).' Juſt as my tenant believed me, when once I ſent him word, 'that I had cancelled his bond

(*u*) MARSHAL *on Sanctification*, p. 176.
(*w*) Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 358, 359.
(*x*) Ibid. p. 312, 313.
(*y*) Ibid. p. 109. (*z*) Ibid. p. 181.

'and forgiven his debt (*a*). Juſt as my 'ſervant believed me, when I freely gave 'him a little farm (*b*). And juſt as you 'believed the eſtate your own, which was 'bequeathed to you in your late father's laſt 'laſt Will.' You firſt believed your title good, and then took poſſeſſion of it as your own (*c*). I am ſenſible, this is not what is called the orthodox opinion; it is more 'refined and exalted (*d*),' and more exactly agreeable to the truth (*e*).

PAUL. But, my dear THERON, how do you know that Chriſt, Pardon, Grace and Glory are yours? What evidence have you for your belief? A belief, on which you venture your precious ſoul for a whole eternity!

THER. The holy Spirit clears up my title (*f*), and enables me to appropriate to myſelf in particular, what is given, granted and made over in the written word to ſinners in general (*g*).—To explain myſelf, it is written in *Iſa.* ix. 6. "To us a Son is "given. *Iſa.* liii. 6. "The Lord hath "laid on him the iniquities of us all (*h*). "1 *Cor.* xv. 1. Chriſt died for our ſins (*i*).

(*a*) Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 298.
(*b*) Ibid. p. 273. (*c*) Ibid. p. 255.
(*d*) Ibid. p. 295. (*e*) Ibid. p. 312, 313, 334, 335.
(*f*) Ibid. p. 295.
(*g*) Iſai. liii. 6. *Dialogues*, p. 305, 314.
(*h*) 1 Cor. xv. 1. *Dialogues*, p. 304, 308.
(*i*) John vi. 32. *Dial.* 318.

" *John* vi. 32. My Father giveth you the " true bread from heaven (*k*). 1 *John* v. 9. " This is the record, that God hath given to " us eternal life (*l*). *Acts* xiii. 28. Unto " you is preached the forgiveneſs of ſins (*m*). " *Iſa.* xliii. 25. I, even I, am he, that blot- " teth out thy tranſgreſſions." And by Faith I appropriate all this to myſelf. I believe that Chriſt is mine, given to me in particular: My ſins in particular were laid on him: He died for my ſins in particular: He is my bread: Eternal life is mine: My ſins are forgiven: My tranſgreſſions are blotted out. And ſo according to ſcripture " I be- " lieve the love that God hath to me. 1 *John* " iv. 16 (*n*). I believe I ſhall be ſaved " *Acts* xv. 11. I believe Chriſt loved me, " and gave himſelf for me. *Gal.* ii. 20 (*o*). With *Thomas* I ſay, 'My Lord, My God! '*John* xx. 28.' 'I am perſuaded in my 'heart, that Jeſus is my Lord, who bought 'me with his blood: That Jeſus is my 'God, who will exert all his adorable per- 'fections for my good (*q*).' This is Faith, according to the common acceptation of the word believe (*r*). And this Faith our Saviour himſelf allows to be genuine. And

(*k*) *Dial.* p. 307.
(*l*) *Dialogues*, p. 319.
(*m*) *Dialogues*, p. 303, 329.
(*o*) *Dialogues*, p. 326.
(*q*) *Dialogues*, p. 330.
(*r*) *Dialogues*, p. 297, 330.

if I ſhould not thus believe, I ſhould make God a liar (*s*).

PAUL. How make God a liar? my dear THERON! hath God ſaid, that Chriſt died with an abſolute deſign to ſave all mankind? And hath God expreſly declared that he will ſave them all? That you think yourſelf obliged in conſcience, while out of Chriſt, to believe he died with an abſolute deſign to ſave you! And that God will certainly ſave you! And that it would be no better than making God a liar, not to believe ſo!

THER. No, no. God hath never ſaid any ſuch thing, expreſly or implicitly. Yea, God hath plainly enough declared, that Chriſt died with an abſolute deſign to ſave only the elect; and that in fact no other will be ſaved. This we are all agreed in (*t*).

PAUL. Did you know then that you was one of the elect, before you believed? That you thought yourſelf bound in conſcience to believe that you ſhould be ſaved; leſt otherwiſe, you ſhould be guilty of ſo horrible a ſin, as to make God a liar?

THER. No, by no means. For no man can know his election till after Faith and Juſtification.

PAUL. How then could you make God a liar? Is it any where declared in his written

(*s*) *Dialogues*, p. 354.

(*t*) *Boſton* on the *Two Covenants*, p. 27—34. *Note*, He ſays, *Iſai.* liii. 6. (a text THERON juſt now applied to himſelf) reſpects *only* the Elect, p. 30.

word, that your ſins in particular are forgiven, and that you ſhall be ſaved?

THER. No. So far from it, that before I believed my ſins were forgiven, they were in fact not forgiven: But I was under condemnation and wrath.

PAUL. But ſurely here is ſome great myſtery! You ſay, you believe that Chriſt died with a deſign to ſave only the elect, and that you did not know that you was elected; and yet you believed that Chriſt died with a deſign to ſave you. You ſay, your ſins were not forgiven before you believed; and yet you believed they were forgiven. You ſeem, my Friend, to be ſo far from any danger of making God a liar by *not* believing; that rather you make him a liar *by* believing your ſins are forgiven, when God ſays they are not.—At leaſt, to make the beſt of it, I do not ſee what evidence you have for your belief. Nay, how can ſuch a Faith as yours poſſibly be the reſult of evidence, and of a rational conviction? For the caſe does not ſeem to admit of any evidence. For how can there be any evidence, to prove the truth of that which as yet is not true? Pray, unfold this riddle, like a right honeſt man; and tell me the ſecret of the whole affair.

THER. This matter is honeſtly ſtated, and that with great exactneſs, in Mr MARSHAL's *Goſpel-Myſtery*, a book my ASPASIO values

next to the Bible (*u*). Theſe are the very words of that celebrated Author. 'Let it 'be well obſerved, that the reaſon why we are 'to aſſure ourſelves in our Faith, that God 'freely giveth Chriſt and his ſalvation to 'us in particular, is not becauſe it is a 'truth before we believe it, but becauſe it 'becometh a certain truth when we believe 'it; and becauſe it never will be true ex-'cept we do in ſome meaſure perſuade and 'aſſure ourſelves that it is ſo. We have no 'abſolute promiſe or declaration in ſcripture, 'that God certainly will or doth give 'Chriſt and his ſalvation to any one of us 'in particular; neither do we know it to 'be true already by ſcripture, or ſenſe, or 'reaſon, before we aſſure ourſelves abſo-'lutely of it: Yea, we are without Chriſt's 'ſalvation at preſent, in a ſtate of ſin and 'miſery, under the curſe and wrath of 'God. Only—we are bound by the com-'mand of God, thus to aſſure ourſelves: 'And the ſcripture doth ſufficiently warrant 'us, that we ſhall not deceive ourſelves "in believing a lie: But according to our "Faith, ſo ſhall it be to us (*x*)." *Note*, 'This is a ſtrange kind of Aſſurance, far 'different from other ordinary kinds; and 'therefore no wonder if it be found weak 'and imperfect, and difficult to be obtained, 'and aſſaulted with many doubtings. We

(*u*) Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 336.
(*x*) Matt. ix. 29.

'are conſtrained to believe other things on 'the clear evidence we have that they are 'true, and would remain true, whether we 'believe them or no; ſo that we cannot deny 'our aſſent, without rebelling againſt the 'light of our ſenſes, reaſon, or conſcience. 'But here our aſſurance is not impreſſed 'on our thoughts by any evidence of the 'thing; but we muſt work it out in our-'ſelves by the aſſiſtance of the Spirit of 'God (*y*).' Labouring for it, as my dear ASPASIO explains the words, 'inceſſantly 'and aſſiduouſly, till our Lord come (*z*).' "What things ſoever ye deſire when ye "pray, believe that ye receive them, and "ye ſhall have them (*b*)."

(*y*) Mr MARSHAL *on Sanctification*, p. 173, 174.

(*z*) Ibid. Preface, p. 7.

(*b*) Mark ix. 24. — Reader, ſtop and think a minute. What is it that we are thus to aſſure ourſelves of, *without any Evidence from Scripture, or Senſe, or Reaſon*; "That God ſo loved the world, as to give "his only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in "him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life?" —No; for this is true before we believe it, and whether we believe it or not; and it is a truth plainly taught in Scripture. What then? 'That God free-'ly giveth Chriſt and his ſalvation to *me* in particular,' according to Mr MARSHAL. That 'Pardon is mine, 'Grace is mine, Chriſt and all his ſpiritual bleſſings 'are mine,' as Mr HERVEY expreſſes it. And now, it is true enough, 'this is not declared in Scripture; is 'not true *before* we believe it; and we muſt believe 'without any evidence from ſcripture, ſenſe or reaſon.' Thus the point is ſtated in a book Mr HERVEY approves of next to the Bible.

OBJECTION.

PAUL. I have on the table a paper containing twelve ſhort Queries, relative to the point in hand. If it is not diſagreeable, I will read it to you.

OBJECTION. No, ſays Mr *Gellatly*, a great admirer of Mr HERVEY, no ſuch thing: 'We do not believe 'we have a *ſaving intereſt* in Chriſt: we only believe 'we have a *common intereſt*. A ſaving intereſt is not 'made over to us in the Goſpel grant; but a common 'intereſt is ours by a free deed of gift. Wherefore I 'believe I have a common intereſt; I claim it, I de-'mand it, I take poſſeſſion of it as my own. And 'this is *Faith*." See Mr *Gellatly*'s *Obſervations*, &c. p. 76—88.

ANSWER. You *claim*, you *take poſſeſſion*,—of what? my friend!—of a *common intereſt*. This is *yours*, you ſay. This you claim, this you poſſeſs. And this is ALL. A *common* intereſt, and no more. You *claim* no more, and you can *have* no more on this foot: for you acknowledge your *deed of gift* conveys no more.— But Meſſieurs HERVEY and MARSHAL claim more; they take poſſeſſion of a *ſaving intereſt* as their own: and therefore honeſtly confeſs, they have no 'evidence from ſcripture, ſenſe or reaſon.' And if Mr *Gellatly* ſhould venture to put in as high a claim, I hope he will make as honeſt a confeſſion.

OBJECT. Yes. But 'I believe that Chriſt is mine, 'and that I ſhall have life and ſalvation by him,' p. 103.

ANSW. 'Salvation!"— But this is a *ſaving intereſt* not made over in your *deed of gift*, as your own. The Bible no where declares that you *in particular* 'ſhall 'have life and ſalvation.' You believe *now* 'with-'out any evidence from ſcripture, ſenſe or reaſon,' juſt as Mr MARSHAL ſays. So I ſee your faith is the ſame as his; but he is frank and open-hearted, and tells the honeſt truth to the world.

OBJECT. But if a common intereſt in Chriſt and ſalvation are mine, by the free and abſolute grant of

THER. If you pleaſe, Sir, I ſhould be glad to hear it.

PAUL. It was wrote this very day, on reading that remarkable paſſage in Mr MARSHAL you have juſt recited, and on a general view of the controverſy, as ſtated by him, and by your Friend ASPASIO, and as expecting to ſee you this evening.

TWELVE QUERIES.

Query I. Did God ever require any one of the ſons of *Adam* to believe any propoſition to be true, unleſs it was in fact true before he believed it? We are required to believe, 'there is a God'—that 'Chriſt is 'the Son of God,—that he died for ſinners, '—that he ſent his apoſtles to preach the Goſ-'pel to every creature'—that "he that be-'lieveth ſhall be ſaved'—that 'he that be-'lieveth not ſhall be damned'—that 'with-'out holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord'—in a word, we are required to believe all the truths taught in the Bible.—But then, they are all true before we believe them, and whether we believe them or not.

Query II. Are not all thoſe truths contained in the ſcriptures of the old and new

the Goſpel; this gives me a warrant, by faith, to claim and take poſſeſſion of Chriſt and ſalvation as my own for ever; that is, to believe that Chriſt is mine, and that I ſhall have life and ſalvation by him, p. 88—90.

ANSW. That is, if a common intereſt is mine, this gives me a warrant to believe a ſaving intereſt is mine. And ſo, according to Mr MARSHAL, 'tho' a ſaving 'intereſt is not mine before I believe; yet if I believe 'it is mine, then it will be mine." But of this more preſently.

Teſtament, which it is neceſſary for us to know and believe in order to our ſalvation? Is not this a point which has ever been ſtrenuouſly maintained by all Proteſtants? But are they not all true before we believe them, and whether we believe them or not?

Query III. Is it ſafe to venture our ſouls for eternity, merely on the truth of a propoſition no where contained in the Bible? 'THERON, Chriſt died for thee in particular, 'and thy ſins are forgiven.' Is this propoſition contained in the Bible? Is it taught in ſcripture! If it had been, would it not have been true before it was believed? and whether it was ever believed or no?—If THERON ventures his ſoul upon the truth of this propoſition, and finds himſelf at laſt deceived, can he blame the Bible? Was it contained in that book? Did he learn it thence?—Nay, he owns he did not. But then he thinks God has required him to work up himſelf to ſuch a belief, and promiſed, that "according to his Faith, ſo "ſhall it be unto him." And yet owns, he has 'no evidence of the thing from ſcripture, ſenſe, or reaſon.'

Query IV. Did God ever require any one of the ſons of *Adam*, to believe any thing to be true, without ſufficient previous evidence that it was true? Look thro' the Bible. Where ſhall we find one inſtance? Not in the old Teſtament—not in

the new Teſtament—no, not even in one of thoſe particulars theſe writers uſually refer to, to illuſtrate and confirm this 'ſtrange 'kind of Aſſurance.'

Not in *Abraham*—who "againſt hope, "believed in hope," that he ſhould have a ſon; *Sarah* being not only barren, but paſt the age of child-bearing. For he had ſufficient evidence for the thing he believed: Even the known, the plain, the expreſs promiſe of the God of truth (*c*).

Not in the *Iſraelites*—Who left *Egypt*, ſet out for *Canaan*, but "could not enter in "becauſe of unbelief." For they had ſufficient evidence to believe, that God was able and willing to do all that he had engaged (*d*). And that if they would truſt his wiſdom, power, goodneſs and fidelity,

(*c*) HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 191, 355.

(*d*) God's promiſe, *Exod.* iii. 17. to bring the *Iſraelites* to *Canaan*, did not abſolutely oblige him to bring every individual man, woman and child there. Some might die by the way, and yet God *not be a liar*, Exod. xxxii. 27, 28. Yea, many did die by the way; and yet it is *impoſſible for God to lie*, Heb. vi. 18. That phraſe in *Numb.* xiv. 34, proves, that God did not think himſelf bound by his promiſe to bring them *every one* there, let them be ever ſo perverſe. But if God was not abſolutely obliged to bring every one there, then no one *in particular*, when they ſet out from *Egypt*, had ſufficient warrant to believe and ſay, 'I ſhall get to *Canaan*; I know I ſhall: God has 'promiſed, and I ſhould make him a liar if I did not 'believe that I, in particular, ſhould get ſafe there.' After that declaration in *Numb.* xiv. 31. *Caleb* and *Joſhua* had

be at his beck, and march under his banner, and "wholly follow him (*e*), they might ſafely enter, and eaſily conquer the country, although their "walls were built up to hea-"ven, and the ſons of Anak were there."

Not in *David*—Who believed that he ſhould be King of *Iſrael*; for he had ſufficient evidence for his belief, from the expreſs promiſe of almighty God (*f*).

Not in "the pious Jews in Babylon (*g*)." For although they could not ſee the leaſt probability, from outward appearances, of their return to their beloved *Zion*; yet they had a good warrant to "truſt in the Lord, "and ſtay themſelves upon their God," who was able, and who had expreſly and abſolutely promiſed, at the end of ſeventy years, to bring them back (*h*).

Nor in *Peter*, walking on the water. For he had ſufficient evidence, from Chriſt's commanding him to come to him, to believe that Chriſt would keep him from ſinking (*i*).

had a good warrant for ſuch a belief. And ſo, after we know we are united to Chriſt by a true and lively faith, we may be certain that we ſhall get ſafe to heaven at laſt, *John* iii. 16. and chap. v. 24. but not before; as there is no abſolute promiſe of ſalvation to *all Mankind*, Gal. iii. 29. John iii. 18. Rom. ix. 15, 21. 2 Cor. i. 20. Compare *Joſh.* i. 6. with *Joſh.* vii. 5. and *Heb.* vi. 18. See alſo *Numb.* xxxii. 15.

(*e*) Numb xxxii. 11.

(*f*) Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 324, 357, 362.

(*g*) Iſai. l. 10. (*h*) *Dialogues*, p. 321.

(*i*) Ibid. p. 331.

Nor in the Diſciples—ſo often upbraided for their unbelief of Chriſt's reſurrection. For they had ſufficient evidence that he was riſen (*k*). Nor in thoſe who had the Faith of miracles, and could ſay to "this moun-"tain, Be thou removed, and caſt into the "ſea;" for they had ſufficient evidence to believe it would be done, reſulting from Chriſt's expreſs promiſe in the caſe. When they were called to work miracles in confirmation of the Chriſtian Religion, they had not the leaſt reaſon to doubt in their hearts, but that he, who had authorized them, would, for his honour's ſake, and for his word's ſake, perform the miracles, which they were inſpired to declare ſhould be done (*l*). Nor in thoſe who came to Chriſt to be healed. For they had ſufficient evidence, to believe that Chriſt was able to do it (*m*). Nor indeed is there one inſtance in the Bible, of God's requiring a man to believe any thing whatſoever, without ſufficient previous evidence of its truth.

How incredible, therefore! how infinitely incredible is it! that God ſhould firſt put the Bible into our hands, as rational creatures, and charge us ſtrictly to adhere to it on pain of eternal damnation (*n*). And then ſuſpend the eternal ſalvation of all mankind on their believing a thing to be true, no

(*k*) *Dialogues*, p. 355, 356.
(*l*) MARSHAL *on Sanctification*, p. 174.
(*m*) Ibid. p. 173. (*n*) Rev. xxii. 18.

where contained in the Bible; yea, of the truth of which they have no evidence, from 'ſcripture, ſenſe, or reaſon;' yea, which, as yet is not true, but flatly contradictory to divine revelation: and ſentence men to eternal damnation, for not believing, what they would be glad to believe with all their hearts, had they ſufficient evidence of its truth! For there is no man but would be glad to know, that inſtead of the eternal torments of hell, he ſhould have the eternal joys of heaven (*o*).

(*o*) Some, who are in this ſcheme, pretend to be great enemies to *carnal Reaſon*. But they muſt renounce all reaſon, and the Bible too, or, one would think, they never can be full proof againſt conviction. But they ſay, 'We muſt become fools for Chriſt.' But do they really think that Chriſtianity is in fact a *fooliſh Religion?* Chriſtianity, which is the *Wiſdom of God!* and which exhibits a moſt exact picture of all the divine perfections: a picture almoſt infinitely brighter than that which was given in the creation of the world. The work of our Redemption is the maſter-piece of all God's works, and Chriſtianity the brighteſt diſplay of all God's perfections. Its wiſdom, glory and beauty are ſuch, as gain the attention of all the exalted geniuſes of the heavenly world, 1 *Pet.* i. 12. What an infinite reproach to God and his Son is it then, for us mortals to miſrepreſent this rational, divine and glorious Religion, ſo as to make it, in fact, one of the moſt fooliſh, inconſiſtent and abſurd things imaginable? And then, to hide the ſhame of its nakedneſs, raiſe an outcry about *carnal Reaſon!* By this means, many poor ſinners have been early led to look upon experimental religion as a ſilly, fooliſh thing; altho', in reality, there is nothing in it but what

Query V. Is not this the difference between Faith and Presumption, as the words are commonly understood among mankind,

is as rational as the Mathematics. Yea, if true Religion were not perfectly rational, how could it please the infinitely wise God, who is the fountain and source of all Reason? How could it be suited to raise, exalt and ennoble rational creatures? or how could it deserve to be called by the name of WISDOM, by *Solomon* the wisest of men?

OBJECT. 'But if the Religion of the Bible is so rational a thing, why are not *Socinians*, *Pelagians*, &c. 'pleased with it, who so greatly cry up Reason?'

ANSW. Merely because it is so contrary to the darling corruptions of their hearts. Our blessed Saviour, who well understood human nature, and the nature of his own Religion, affirms that this is the true cause, *John* iii. 19—21. Had they but good hearts they would be charmed with the wisdom and glory of the Christian Religion, *John* viii. 47. even as the inhabitants of heaven be, *Eph.* iii. 10. For after all their glorying, their own schemes, altho' a little better glossed over, yet in reality are as inconsistent and absurd as this that THERON pleads for. In the apostolic age divine truths were set in so clear a light, that the worst of heretics were obliged, were necessitated to see, that they were inconsistent with themselves, and so were forced to be *self-condemned*; as is plainly implied in *Tit.* iii. 10, 11. "An heretic, after the first and second "admonition, reject: knowing that he that is such, "is subverted, and sinneth, being CONDEMNED OF "HIMSELF." And no doubt there is light enough in the holy Scriptures to produce the same still, were it brought out and held before the eyes of heretics in this age, 2 *Tim.* iii. 16, 17. For the truth, and only the truth, is, or can be universally consistent: but all false schemes, follow them up, will appear to be inconsistent. Reason is wholly on the side of truth; and true religion is the only religion that is perfectly rational and consistent throughout.

viz. that in the one, we believe becauſe we have ſufficient evidence; in the other, without any evidence at all? And is not this the conſtant character of all ſelf-deceived hypocrites, that they have 'a real perſuaſion in 'their hearts' of the Love of God to their ſouls, and a confident expectation of eternal life, without any real evidence (*p*)?

Query VI. Is not this Faith analogous to that which the devil tempted our Saviour to exerciſe; when "(*q*) he brought him to "Jeruſalem, and ſet him on a pinacle of the "temple, and ſaid unto him, If thou be "the Son of God, caſt thyſelf down from "hence: For it is written, (*r*) He ſhall "give his angels charge over thee, to keep "thee, and in their hands they ſhall hold "thee up, leſt at any time thou daſh thy "foot againſt a ſtone?" Here was a promiſe, a precious promiſe, out of God's own word. And "he that believeth not God, "hath made him a liar." The devil urged our Saviour to appropriate, and take it home to himſelf in particular: And be verily 'perſuaded in his heart' he ſhould be ſafe, although he caſt himſelf down. However, on a critical examination of the text the devil recited, there could be no evidence from that of ſafety to Chriſt, if he had caſt himſelf down. So therefore he muſt believe really without any evidence from

(*p*) Matt. vii. 21—27. Luke xiii. 25—27. xviii. 9, 11.
(*q*) Luke iv. 8. (*r*) Pſal. xci. 11.

'ſcripture, ſenſe, or reaſon;' and the devil would have had him think, that "ac-"cording to his Faith, ſo ſhould it be to "him."

Query VII. If the devil attempted thus to delude our bleſſed Saviour himſelf, by miſapplying a precious promiſe, has he not courage? Has he not power?—Has he not will?—to attempt to delude poor ſinners in a like manner; that thereby, devil as he is, he may accompliſh their eternal ruin! And are we not forewarned from heaven, of a falſe ſpirit, and charged "not to believe "every ſpirit (*s*)?" For that "Satan himſelf "is transformed into an angel of light (*t*)."

Query VIII. Did ever Chriſt or his Apoſtles define Faith to be "a real perſuaſion that "Chriſt died for me in particular, and that "pardon, grace and glory are mine?" They call it "coming to Chriſt, receiving Chriſt, "truſting in Chriſt, believing in Chriſt, "believing on Chriſt, *&c.*" But never call it, 'believing Chriſt is mine, and that 'my ſins are forgiven.' It is true, the ſaints in the Old Teſtament, and in the New, uſually ſpeak the language of Aſſurance. And it is as true, they had ſufficient evidence of their good eſtate from their ſanctification. This was their evidence. They knew no other. All who pretended to belong to Chriſt without this, were branded for *Liars*

(*s*) 1 John iv. 1. (*t*) 2 Cor. xi. 14.

(*u*). But where do we ever read of their endeavouring to work up themſelves to an Aſſurance, profeſſedly without any evidence?

Query IX. Is there one in all St *Paul*'s catalogue of believers in *Heb.* xi. whoſe Faith conſiſted in believing without any evidence (*x*)?

Query X. Were ever any awakened ſinners invited and urged to believe, by Chriſt, or his Apoſtles, and told at the ſame time, that the thing they were to believe, was not true as yet, nor had they any evidence from ſcripture, ſenſe, or reaſon, it ever would be true; but however moſt ſolemnly aſſured by the promiſe and oath of God, if they would venture to believe without any evidence at all in the caſe, it ſhould be "according to their Faith?" Was this the thing the Apoſtles dwelt upon in all their preaching? Was this the thing they urged awakened ſinners to, with all their might? No. They never heard of it—neither came it into their hearts to think, that this was juſtifying Faith.

Query XI. Is not the thing believed a lie? It was not true before it was believed, as is granted. But believing an untruth to be true, cannot make it true. It cannot, according to reaſon. It cannot, according to ſcripture. It cannot, according to experience. It was never known ſince the world began to produce this effect, in any

(*u*) 1 John ii. 4. (*x*) HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 326.

one inſtance; unleſs in this caſe. And we have no evidence from ſcripture, ſenſe, or reaſon, that it ever did in this.

Query XII. Is it not aſtoniſhing, and one of the moſt unaccountable things in the world, that a rational creature, with the Bible in his hands, ſhould ever be able to work up himſelf to believe what he knows is not yet true; and what he knows he has no evidence that it ever will be true? No wonder theſe men are ſo much troubled with doubts. No wonder they are afraid they believe a lie. No wonder they are obliged ſo much to ſtrive and ſtruggle againſt this unbelief. A kind of unbelief we no where read of in the Bible. A kind of conflict no ſaint ever had, that ſtands in ſcripture-record; as themſelves are obliged to own (*y*). To ſtruggle daily to believe, without any evidence from ſcripture, ſenſe, or reaſon! to have this for their Chriſtian conflict! an unheard-of conflict in the apoſtolic age; inſtead of ſtruggling againſt this kind of unbelief, ſcripture, ſenſe and reaſon, all join to juſtify it. As nothing can be plainer than that we ought never to believe any thing, with more confidence, than in exact proportion to our evidence. To do otherwiſe, and that profeſſedly, is the moſt preſumptuous thing in the world. And to think, by being thus "ſtrong in the faith," we ſhall give

(*y*) MARSHAL *on Sanctification*, p. 186.

glory to God, is the very firſt-born of deluſion, that even Satan himſelf ever begot in the heart of a fallen creature (z).

(z) HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 355, 342, 343, 369.

Wendelinus, and other ancient and modern writers, without the leaſt ſcruple, ſay, that in the direct act of juſtifying Faith, I believe 'my ſins are forgiven; God 'is reconciled to me,' &c. &c. Others, who ſeem to be in the ſame ſcheme, are more cautious in their expreſſions; and, to avoid the charge of 'believing a 'lie,' they word themſelves ſo ambiguouſly that it is very difficult to know what they mean. For it has often been urged againſt this ſcheme, 'If Faith con-'ſiſts in believing my ſins are forgiven, then they are 'forgiven before I believe, or elſe I believe a lie."— And it is wonderful to ſee what methods have been taken by writers to avoid this difficulty. However, when all is ſaid and done, there are in nature but theſe three ways to ſolve the difficulty; either, (1.) To ſay that our ſins are really forgiven before we do believe; or, (2.) that altho' they are not, yet according to the tenor of the Covenant of Grace, they ſhall be, if we do but believe that they are: or, (3.) a belief that my ſins are forgiven, muſt be left out of the definition of juſtifying Faith. The firſt was the ſolution of the Antinomians in former ages: but it is ſo contrary to the expreſs declaration of Scripture, *John* iii. 18. that it will not do. The third gives up the whole ſcheme they contend for; and ſo that will not do. The ſecond, which Mr MARSHAL has taken, bad as it is, is the only one that is left. Now if they all mean as he does, it is to be wiſhed they would all ſpeak as plain, that we might preciſely know what they intend. This would ſoon bring the controverſy to an iſſue.— But when I read their books, they ſeem to me ſometimes to ſolve the difficulty one way, and ſometimes another. Sometimes they repreſent as tho' 'pardon 'was mine abſolutely before Faith;' and ſometimes juſt the contrary. Sometimes they ſay, 'We have the

'cleareſt

PAUL. Thus, my dear THERON, you ſee a little by theſe *Queries*, what I think of this kind of Faith. But there is one moſt myſterious thing, I deſire you to explain.—Not why you doubt—I do not wonder you are often aſſaulted with doubts. Nor do I wonder your Friend ASPASIO meets with the ſame conflict (*a*). You are, both, men of too much ſenſe and reaſon, not to feel yourſelves a little ſhocked ſometimes, in ſpite of all your principles. But this I wonder at—I am ſurpriſed, how you ever

'eleareſt evidence from Scripture for this belief;' and ſometimes they ſay, 'We have *no* evidence from Scrip-'ture, ſenſe or reaſon.' Sometimes Faith is raiſed up to 'a perſuaſion that I in particular am pardoned, and 'ſhall certainly have eternal life.' And then again it ſinks down into a mere '*belief* that I have a *common* 'intereſt in goſpel-offers, ſuch as even reprobates 'have.' And this is all I have to believe. But in a few pages, Faith is raiſed up again as high as ever: ſo that one knows not where to find them.—They ſeem to be *pinched*, and not to know how to get out. Therefore they now run here, and then run there; but know not what to do to avoid the glaring inconſiſtence of their ſcheme; and yet dread to give it up—At preſent, for aught that appears, Mr MARSHAL's ſolution is the beſt that the caſe can admit of. To be ſure Mr HERVEY thinks it the beſt, as he eſteems Mr MARSHAL's *Myſtery* next to the Bible. And in his Preface to Mr MARSHAL's book, he ſays, 'I ſhall re-'joice in the proſpect of having the *Goſpel-Myſtery of* '*Sanctification* ſtand as a FOURTH VOLUME to *Theron* '*and Aſpaſio*.' And therefore I have a juſt warrant in the preſent controverſy to conſider it as ſuch; and to view *all four Volumes* as containing one complete ſcheme.

(*a*) HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 353.

came to believe. Pray, be ſo kind, as to give me a particular narrative, how Faith was wrought in your heart.

THER. I had lately made a viſit at PHILENOR's, with my dear ASPASIO; where, in the kindeſt and moſt affectionate manner, I was urged to believe; aſſured, it was my duty and intereſt, and that God's promiſe and oath was engaged that I ſhould never be aſhamed; but it ſhould be "according "to my Faith." And all the precious promiſes, and gracious invitations in God's holy word, were ſet in order before me, in the moſt moving language, and I was argued out of all my objections. Whereupon, after my return home, as I was walking in my garden, longing to have an intereſt in Chriſt, meditating on the promiſes, ſtriving to take them home to myſelf, praying for the Spirit to witneſs with my ſpirit, that I was a child of God, thus earneſtly endeavouring to work up myſelf to this Aſſurance, and thus waiting for the holy Spirit; — as I was thinking on the dying Love of Chriſt, thoſe words ſeemed to be ſpoken to me, "O thou of little Faith, wherefore "doſt thou doubt?" Wherefore doſt thou doubt of my Love to thee, for whom I have ſhed my Blood? I believed—I was full of love and joy—and for ſeveral days, all my thoughts were taken up about heavenly things. I was weaned from the world,

all "old things ſeemed to be paſſed away, "and all things to become new."

PAUL. Let any chriſtleſs, graceleſs ſinner, in your circumſtances, believe, as you believed; and from principles which are natural to mankind, he would feel as you felt. And, as all your affections might flow from natural principles, they were no evidence of a ſupernatural change; as you may ſee proved at large, in a book I have as good an opinion of, as your ASPASIO has of Mr MARSHAL's *Myſtery*, &c (*b*). Therefore, from theſe effects of your Faith, you cannot argue it was no deluſion. Becauſe, if it had been a deluſion, it might have produced juſt the ſame.—You will ſuffer me therefore to enquire, 'What warrant had you for this 'belief?' For, although "all the pro-"miſes of God are in Chriſt, Yea and "Amen (*c*); yet to him that is out of Chriſt, God is *a conſuming fire*. He is *condemned*, and the "wrath of God abideth on "him (*d*)." Pray tell me, muſt not a ſinner be in Chriſt, before he is entitled to the promiſes?

THER. Yes. For it is his union with, and relation to Chriſt, which lays the foundation for his intereſt in all the bleſſings purchaſed by him. Firſt, we are *children*, and then *heirs* (*e*). Firſt, we are ingrafted into

(*b*) Mr *Edwards* on *Religious Affections*.
(*c*) 2 Cor. i. 20. (*d*) John iii. 18, 36.
(*e*) Rom. viii. 17.

Chriſt, *the true Vine*, and then partake of the ſap (*f*). Firſt, we are married to Chriſt, and then we are intereſted in all his riches and glory (*g*).

PAUL. A charming truth this, my THERON! And if you will attend to it, and be conſiſtent with yourſelf, it muſt lead you back from the paths of error, to the high road which goes directly to the heavenly Zion. For, if we muſt be in Chriſt, before we are intereſted in his benefits; we muſt know that we are in Chriſt, before we can know our intereſt in his benefits. And, therefore, the firſt direct act of Faith cannot conſiſt in believing that his benefits are mine.—'*Arietta* was firſt married to *Philenor*, before her debts devolved on him, and all his dignity was derived to her. Had ſhe been carried away with a fond dream, with a full perſuaſion, that *Philenor*, and all his riches and honour were hers before marriage, and to the neglect of matrimonial rites, ſhe might have enjoyed the comfort of her dream; but muſt have really lived in widowhood, and died in debt, never the better for the 'wealthy and illuſtrious *Philenor*.' As this is your ASPASIO's own ſimile, I hope you will the more diligently attend to it (*b*).

(*f*) John xv. 1—7.

(*g*) See all this finely repreſented, as well as rightly ſtated in Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 213—218. whether conſiſtently with the reſt of his ſcheme we ſhall ſee hereafter.

(*b*) Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 215.

Juſtifying Faith is that act, whereby we, being "dead to the Law, are married to "Chriſt (*i*)." And after marriage we may juſtly ſay, "My beloved is mine, and I am "his (*k*);" but not *before* (*l*).

THER. Yes. Let me tell you, that any chriſtleſs, graceleſs ſinner in the world, has equal right, with the beſt ſaint, to adopt this language, and ſay, "My Beloved is "mine, and I am his." For this ties the very knot, this conſtitutes the union (*m*).

PAUL. I think, for once, my THERON, your dear ASPASIO himſelf ſeems to contradict you. You doubtleſs remember his words, "My beloved is mine, and I am his"— 'I dare not ſay, it is the poſey of the myſtic 'ring: But it is the undoubted effect of 'this divine union (*n*).'

THER. Sure I am, my dear ASPASIO taught me, by the firſt direct act of Faith, to go to God, and ſay, 'Pardon is mine; 'Grace is mine; Chriſt and all his ſpiritual 'Bleſſings are mine:' not becauſe I am conſcious of ſanctifying operations in my own breaſt, but previous to any Reflection on inherent graces. I am not therefore, firſt, by reflection, to know, that I am married to Chriſt, before I call him my own. Yea, rather, I muſt firſt know, that he is mine,

(*i*) Rom. vii. 4. 2 Cor. xi. 2. (*k*) Cant. ii. 16.
(*l*) Eph. ii. 12. John iii. 18.
(*m*) Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 343, 344.
(*n*) Ibid. p. 218.

before I can, before I dare, come to him. This, I am ſure, is my ASPASIO's doctrine(*o*).

PAUL. But then Chriſt and all his ſpiritual Bleſſings are yours, before you are in Chriſt. Which is contrary to what ASPASIO affirms (*p*). And contrary to the plain ſenſe of the New Teſtament, as you but juſt now ſtated the matter yourſelf. But to dwell upon this inconſiſtence no longer—Pray tell me what warrant you had from ſcripture, to believe that Chriſt and all his ſpiritual Bleſſings were yours.

THER. I was awakened to ſome ſenſe of my danger of eternal ruin, I longed to believe that my ſins were pardoned and that Chriſt was mine; but I could not ſee my title clear. ASPASIO told me it was 'perfectly clear.' That I had as good a warrant for this belief, as a neighbouring clergyman had to take any book in my library, whom I had lately aſſured, 'that he was as welcome to any book as though they were all his own.' Yea, as good a warrant for this belief, as one of my ſervants had to believe me, when I gave him a farm for his own (*q*).

PAUL. Shocking!—I would not treat an awakened ſinner ſo for all the world. But how did ASPASIO make it out, that your title to pardon was thus clear? When Mr MARSHAL, his favourite Author, owns,

(*o*) Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 312, 313, 358, 362.
(*p*) Ibid. p. 213—218. (*q*) Ibid. p. 269, 273.

there is no evidence of the thing from ſcripture, ſenſe, or reaſon.

THER. He referred me to *John* vii. 37. "If any man thirſt, let him come unto "me, and drink." But you thirſt, ſaid he; therefore to you this promiſe is made (*r*). And he was always encouraging me to this belief, by taking a kind notice of my 'earneſt prayers, ſorrows, tears, good 'deſires, and ſenſe of unworthineſs(*s*).' And from this quarter my firſt encouragement aroſe to hope and believe that Chriſt, Pardon, Grace and Glory were mine.

PAUL. But according to this, O my THERON, your own 'awakenings, 'earneſt 'prayers, ſorrows, tears, good deſires, and 'ſenſe of unworthineſs,' laid the firſt foundation of your Faith. This was the ſecret language of your heart, 'To ſuch a one as 'I am the promiſes belong: and ſo I may 'ſafely believe they are all my own.'—As much your own as your ſervant's little farm was his. And if your encouragement to believe, took its riſe from your own inherent qualifications; if your own goodneſs, in whatever humble form, emboldened you to come to Chriſt; your hope of acceptance was really bottomed on your own righteouſneſs: and ſo yours is a ſelf-righteous Faith. And if this be the caſe, a clear ſight of the

(*r*) Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 270.

(*s*) Ibid. p. 157, 158, 207, 208, 220, 265, 266, 289, 290, 293, 294.

badneſs of your heart, and of the ſtrictneſs of the Law, would entirely kill your Faith (*t*). If your good deſires, like ſo much money in hand, encouraged you to come to Chriſt; your courage would fail you, did you know, that the beſt deſires you ever had, according to law and ſtrict juſtice, merit eternal damnation. Did you thus feel yourſelf without money, you would not dare to come.

THER. But is it not true? Are not the promiſes made to thoſe that *thirſt* (*u*)? That "labour and are heavy laden (*x*)?"

PAUL. Theſe are not promiſes, my THERON, which convey a title to pardon and ſalvation to ſinners out of Chriſt, on condition of their good deſires: They are rather invitations to a union with Chriſt, by a true and living Faith. They give a ſinner a good warrant to *come to Chriſt*: to come "without money and without price (*y*)," and thoſe who thus come *ſhall find reſt to their ſouls*. But they give no grounds to one out of Chriſt, encouraged by his own righteouſneſs, to believe that Pardon, Grace and Glory are his.

THER. I did not mean, that my own good deſires, prayers, *&c.* gave me a right to believe. I had a good right before. As an 'abandoned ſinner (*z*),' I had an actual

(*t*) Rom. vii. 9. (*u*) John vii. 37.
(*x*) Matt. xi. 28, *&c.*. (*y*) Iſai. lv. 1.
(*z*) Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 307, 308.

right to Chriſt and all his benefits, by an 'actual gift from the almighty Majeſty,' juſt as my ſervant had to his little farm by my donation (*a*).

PAUL. After you had given the little farm to your ſervant, it was his. It was his, before he believed it his. Your donation made it his, and not his belief. It was his before he believed it, and whether he believed it or not. He had ſufficient evidence to believe it his, previous to his belief. Now if Chriſt and all his benefits are yours in this ſenſe, then you was juſtified, adopted, ſanctified and entitled to eternal glory, while ſecure in ſin; months, nay, years, before any of your converſation with ASPASIO. Yea, your title is as old as the Goſpel. Which you conſider as your deed of gift, or as Chriſt's laſt Will and Teſtament, in which all theſe legacies were bequeathed to you. Your title, your abſolute title commenced at the death of the Teſtator.—'When your 'old acquaintance *Charicles* left you a hand-'ſome legacy; what did you do, to eſtab-'liſh your title, and make it your own?'

THER. 'My title was pre-eſtabliſhed by my 'Friend's donation. I had nothing to do, 'but to claim, to accept, and to poſſeſs.'—And I did the very ſame in the preſent caſe (*b*). And ever ſince this firſt act of faith, 'on this unalterable ground, I aſſert and

(*a*) Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 272, 273.
(*b*) Ibid. p. 255.

'maintain my title. Pardon is mine; 'Grace is mine; Chriſt and all his ſpiritual 'Bleſſings are mine; becauſe all theſe pre-'cious privileges are conſigned over to me 'in the everlaſting Goſpel (*c*).' This is the proper notion of believing. 'When I ſent 'a meſſage to my tenant—aſſuring him, I 'had canceled the bond, and forgiven his 'debt; he believed the meſſage to be true. 'So I give credit to the gracious declarations 'of my God. So I believe (*d*).'

(*c*) Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 362.

(*d*) Ibid. p. 297, 298.

And with THERON agrees Mr *Boſton*, who in his book on the *Two Covenants* maintains, that Chriſt in *his Laſt Will and Teſtament* did actually bequeath 'regenerating Grace, Juſtification, Adoption, Sanctifi-'cation, and eternal Life, freely, abſolutely, and un-'conditionally, to every ſinner of *Adam*'s race.' And adds, that Chriſt himſelf is alſo *Executor* of this Will, and by his office as ſuch obliged to make out all theſe *Legacies* to all the Legatees that are pleaſed to put in their claim, and make their demands. And Faith, according to him, conſiſts in believing *all is mine*, and in claiming and taking poſſeſſion of *all as my own*. See pag. 114, 199—214. And ariſes from no higher principle than *ſelf preſervation*, p. 262, 263. St *Paul* uſed to ſay, "if children, then heirs," *Rom.* viii. 17. *Gal.* iii. 29. But according to this *new* Goſpel, it is, *if ſinners, then heirs*; and this will be reckoned good news for unregenerate ſinners. They are no longer at God's ſovereign mercy, according to *Rom.* ix. 15. nor need they come as poor *beggars*, according to *Luke* xviii. 13. their title to all things is '*perfectly clear*,' even while unregenerate and out of Chriſt. And they may come as *heirs* who have a legal right to make *demands*, and put in their *claim*, and

ſay,

PAUL. To whom are Chriſt, Pardon, Grace and Glory conſigned over and conveyed in the Goſpel-grant? What are their names? Or what are their characters? Who are the men ſo highly favoured?—In wills, and

ſay, 'Pardon is mine; I claim it, I demand it as my own.' And the *Executor* is *obliged* to anſwer their demands, and give out their Legacies. This ſcheme, were it true, would ſuit corrupt nature, even better than the Arminian. As we all had rather have eſtates left to us by Wills, than be at pains to work for them; ſo it is eaſier to claim and demand heaven, than to do as the Phariſee did in *Luke* xviii. 12. Thoſe texts in *Heb.* viii. 10—12. and ix. 15—17. on which they pretend to found their ſcheme, are plainly nothing to the purpoſe. For God does not ſay, "This is the covenant I will make WITH ALL the ſinful race of *Adam*, "I will write my Law in their hearts, &c." But God ſays, "This is the covenant I will make *with the* "*houſe of Iſrael.*" But "he is not a Jew who is one "outwardly," *Rom.* ii. 28, 29. "The children of the "PROMISE are counted for the SEED," *Rom.* ix. 8. "If "ye be Chriſt's, then are ye *Abraham's* ſeed, and heirs "according to the promiſe," *Gal.* iii. 29. But if *out of* Chriſt, we are condemned, and "the wrath of "God abideth on us," *John* iii. 18, 36. and we can *claim* nothing; no, not another moment of time, nor liberty to breathe another breath in God's world.—We have *a title* to not one minute's forbearance; but God may ſend us to hell this inſtant, *Rom.* iii. 19. *Gal.* iii. 10.— OBJECT. But it is ſaid to the *elder* brother, "ALL that I have is thine," *Luke* xv. 31.—ANS. Yes. And with deſign to deſcribe the temper of a Phariſee's heart. The *younger* ſon repreſented Publicans and Sinners, and the *elder* the Phariſees, ſee *ver.* 1, 2. the poor Publican thought he had *no* claim to make, but lay at *mercy*, Luke xviii. 13. the Phariſees ſaid in their hearts, *all is our own.*

and in deeds of gift, you know, the parties, to whom any thing is bequeathed, or given, are mentioned by name. Is it ſo in the Goſpel-grant? Are all theſe bleſſings entailed on believers, or on ſinners, as ſuch?

THER. On ſinners, on all ſinners of *Adam*'s race; and that conſidered merely as ſinners: as my dear ASPASIO proved at large (*e*). And that which is thus freely given to every ſinner, any ſinner in particular has a good warrant to look upon as his own. Thus, then, ſtands my warrant to believe.—'All theſe bleſſings are given to 'ſinners, as ſuch: But I am a ſinner: 'Therefore, all theſe bleſſings are given to 'me (*f*).'

PAUL. That is, 'All ſinners are juſti-'fied, adopted, ſanctified and entitled to 'eternal life: But I am a ſinner: There-'fore I am juſtified, adopted, ſanctified, 'and entitled to eternal life.'—But, my dear THERON, if you know what you ſay, if you really mean as you ſay, and if you affirm theſe ſentiments are 'ſtrictly 'conformable to the unerring oracles' of God, then, all *Adam*'s race are, according to you, actually juſtified, adopted, ſanctified and entitled to eternal glory. And thus your devout ASPASIO carries matters farther than even the famous Dr *John Taylor*,

(*e*) HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 289—309.
(*f*) Ibid. p. 305.

whoſe *Key to the Apoſtolic Writings* is not half ſo heterodox as this; how much ſoever condemned by all the friends of vital piety. For he only ſuppoſes, that 'all within the 'viſible church are juſtified, adopted, &c.' and not all *Adam*'s race.

Beſides, how is all this conſiſtent with the words you juſt now cited out of Mr MARSHAL's *Myſtery*, a book your ASPASIO values next to the Bible? 'We have no abſolute 'promiſe or declaration in ſcripture, that 'God certainly will or doth give Chriſt and 'his ſalvation to any one of us in particular; 'neither do we know it to be true already, 'by ſcripture, ſenſe, or reaſon, before we 'aſſure ourſelves abſolutely of it: Yea, we 'are without Chriſt's ſalvation at preſent, in 'a ſtate of ſin and miſery, under the curſe 'and wrath of God.'—This is a ſtrange kind of Aſſurance. 'Therefore no wonder if it 'be found weak and imperfect, and difficult 'to be obtained, and aſſaulted with many 'doubtings. We are conſtrained to believe 'other things on the clear evidence we have 'that they are true, whether we believe 'them or no; ſo that we cannot deny our 'aſſent, without rebelling againſt the light 'of our ſenſes, reaſon, or conſcience. But 'here our Aſſurance is not impreſſed on our 'thoughts by any evidence of the thing; 'but we muſt work it out in ourſelves, by 'the aſſiſtance of the Spirit of God.'

Yea, how is all this conſiſtent with your own experience, and with the experience of your ASPASIO? For if all ſpiritual bleſſings are by a deed of gift abſolutely made over to all ſinners of *Adam*'s race, and that conſidered merely as ſuch, plainly in the Goſpel, ſo that their 'title is perfectly clear;' then as ſure as the Goſpel is true, all are abſolutely entitled to Pardon, Grace and Glory, before they believe, and whether they believe, or not. And I never heard of you, or your Friend doubting the truth of the Goſpel itſelf. How then can you have any doubts about your title to heaven? Why was you ſo backward to believe your title? Or why was your Friend ſo ready to 'feel 'for you, and ſympathize with you?' How could it be ſo difficult to believe, while at the ſame time he 'beheld his title perfectly 'clear (*g*)?' Did ever any mortal act thus as to temporal things? Was ever a ſon of *Adam* put to great difficulty to believe an inheritance to be his own, when he ſaw with his own eyes, 'his title was perfectly clear,' and had the deed of gift, well executed, in his own hands?—My dear THERON, I am even tempted to doubt, whether you yourſelves believe your own ſcheme. Yea, it ſeems plain, you are all the while afraid you are deluded. 'And no wonder, ſays 'Mr MARSHAL, for you have no evidence, 'from ſcripture, ſenſe, or reaſon.'—Pray,

(*g*) Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 269, 353.

did your ASPASIO ever attempt to prove his ſcheme out of the Bible?

THER. Yes. And once ſpeaking of his differing from the orthodox, I remember, he ſaid, 'I dare not purchaſe their approbation; 'I dare not attempt a coalition of ſenti-'ments.'—Pray, my dear Friend,' ſaid he to me, 'What is the ſtandard of ortho-'doxy?—Is it the word of revelation? 'This ſpeaks once, yea twice, nay, ſome 'hundreds of times, in our favour (*b*).' —And firſt and laſt, I am apt to think, he mentioned above an hundred texts of ſcripture, to prove his point.

PAUL. Out of this great number, pray ſelect ſome of the moſt plain and full to the purpoſe; and on which he ſeemed to lay the greateſt ſtreſs; and let us carefully examine them.

THER. There are many texts, which teach us, that God has given his Son to a loſt world. "To us a Son is given (*i*). "(*k*) God ſo loved the world, that he gave "his only Son." (*l*) Other texts declare as follows. (*m*) "God laid on him the ini-"quity of us all. (*n*) He came into "the world to ſave ſinners. (*o*) Died for "the unjuſt. (*p*) Chriſt died for our ſins.

(*b*) Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 335. (*i*) Iſa. ix. 6.
(*k*) John iii. 16. *Dialogues*, p. 308.
(*l*) Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 305. (*m*) Iſai. liii. 6.
(*n*) *Dialogues*, p. 304. 1 Tim i. 15. (*o*) 1 Pet iii. 18.
(*p*) *Dialogues*, p. 299. 1 Cor. xv. 1.

" (q) This is the record, that God hath " given to us eternal life. (r) To you is " preached the remiſſion of ſins. (s) The " promiſe is to you—and to all that are " afar off, even as many as the Lord our " God ſhall call(t)."—In which ſcriptures, you ſee, Chriſt and all his ſpiritual bleſſings are given and made over to ſinners, as ſuch, freely and abſolutely: So as that every one has a good warrant to believe they are his own. And if we would give the ſame credit to God, as my tenant did to me, we need not, we could not doubt, but that they are all our own (u).

' When *Jonah*, in purſuance of the di-' vine command, cried and ſaid,' " Yet " forty days and Nineveh ſhall be over-" thrown;" without mentioning any by name, " All, from the leaſt even unto the " greateſt believed;" applied the threat-ning to themſelves. When *Moſes* ſpeaking of the *Manna*, ſaid, " This is the bread, " which the Lord hath given you to eat;" without mentioning any by name; the whole congregation ſuppoſed, they had all and every one a good right to take and eat. So when our Saviour ſays, " My Father giveth " you the true bread from heaven (x);" al-

(q) Ibid. p. 319. 1 John v. 9. (r) Acts xiii. 38.
(s) Acts ii. 39. (t) *Dialogues*, p. 303. (u) Ib. p. 298.
(x) John vi. 32.

luding to the Manna, we may all and every one believe it is our own (*y*).

PAUL. Your ASPASIO always ſuppoſes, that all the bleſſings of the Goſpel are granted abſolutely and without any condition; ſo that we have nothing to do, but to believe they are all our own. Whereas, there is always a condition expreſſed, or implied. For according to the conſtant tenor of the Goſpel, we muſt firſt be in Chriſt, by a true and living Faith, before the bleſſings of the Goſpel are ours (*z*).—To deſcend to particulars.

(*y*) *Dialogues*, p. 305—307.

(*z*) All writers on this ſcheme maintain, that pardon, grace and glory are unconditionally and abſolutely given, granted and made over to all ſinners of *Adam*'s race. And this abſolute grant gives each of us a good warrant to believe 'pardon, grace and glo-'ry are mine.' — Reader ſtop, and think one minute. If the grant is not abſolute, it does not make pardon mine, nor give me a right to believe it mine. If it is abſolute, it makes pardon mine before I believe it; and ſo I am juſtified before Faith. 'No, ſay they, 'it is not mine before I believe it mine: but if I be-'lieve it mine, it is mine.' But one would think, if it is not mine *before* I believe, I believe *a lie*. My ſins are pardoned before I believe, or they are not. If they are pardoned before Faith, then I am not juſtified *by* Faith, but *before* Faith. If they are not, then I believe a lie. No, ſays Mr MARSHAL, "accord-"ing to *thy* Faith it ſhall be unto thee:" that is, if 'without any evidence from ſcripture, ſenſe or reaſon, I believe that to be true which is not true, it ſhall become true. This is the heart and ſoul of their ſcheme. Keep this in conſtant view; ſuffer no ambiguous words to drown your mind; and it is eaſy to ſee, that there

It is true, "God ſo loved the world as "to give his only begotten Son."—For what? To die for us.—To what end? "That whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould "not periſh, but have everlaſting life." He that is united to Chriſt by Faith, therefore, ſhall be ſaved. But thoſe who are out of Chriſt, have no intereſt in his ſalvation; but are under a preſent condemnation. "Condemned already." And the "wrath "of God abideth on them." 'Pardon is 'mine.—No—"condemned already." 'God is reconciled to me.'—No—"The "wrath of God abideth on me (*a*)."

It is true, "This is the record, that God "hath given to us eternal life." But—"this life is in his Son." Therefore, he that is by Faith united to Chriſt, hath eternal life. For—"he that hath the Son, "hath life.' But thoſe who are out of Chriſt, have no intereſt in this eternal life. For—"he that hath not the Son, hath not "life (*b*)."

there is not one text in the Bible to their purpoſe. Yea, they give us an exact definition of deluſion, which properly conſiſts in this, namely, 'I believe ſomething 'to *be* true, which is *not* true, till in my imagination 'it *ſeems* true; and ſo I take the *comfort* of it as tho' 'it were true.' Whereas in ſaving Faith there is no truth believed, but what is plainly revealed in the Goſpel; as will appear preſently.

(*a*) John iii. 16, 18, 36. (*b*) 1 John v. 11, 12.

It is true, "That through this man is "preached unto you the forgiveneſs of "ſins." But—Who hath an intereſt in this forgiveneſs? Who is that bleſſed man that is juſtified? Thoſe who are out of Chriſt?—No.—But—"by him all that "believe are juſtified (*c*)."

Again, it is true, "The promiſe is to "you."—And what then?—"Repent and "be baptized every one of you in the name "of Jeſus Chriſt, for the remiſſion of ſins." —Were their ſins already forgiven? No. "Repent and be converted, that your ſins "may"—not becauſe they are, but that they "may—be blotted out." *Acts* ii. 38, 39. and iii. 19.—But what was their ſtate, while impenitent? "Except ye repent, ye "ſhall all likewiſe periſh (*d*)."

Laſtly, It is true, the whole congregation of *Iſrael* were welcome to take the Manna and eat. And it is true, that all mankind are welcome to receive Chriſt, the true Bread, and eat, and live for ever. For this eating is the ſame as uniting to Chriſt, by a true and living Faith. "He that eateth "my fleſh and drinketh my blood, dwel-"leth in me, and I in him." Therefore, "He that eateth me, even he ſhall "live by me."—But what is the ſtate of ſinners out of Chriſt? Have they eternal life?—No.—"Except ye eat the fleſh of

(*c*) Acts xiii. 38, 39. (*d*) Luke xiii. 3, 5.

" the Son of man and drink his blood, ye " have no life in you (*e*)."

Thus the very texts you build your ſcheme upon, are all againſt you. What warrant, therefore, has a ſinner out of Chriſt to ſay, 'Pardon is mine; Grace is mine; 'Chriſt and all his ſpiritual Bleſſings are 'mine?' For theſe precious privileges are not conſigned over to him in the everlaſting Goſpel, while in ſuch a ſtate. Nor ſhall he ever have an intereſt in them, unleſs he is firſt united to Chriſt, by a true and living Faith.

THER. If the curſe of the Law, which is delivered in general terms, not mentioning THERON by name, belongs to THERON; why do not the promiſes of the Goſpel, delivered alſo in general terms, not mentioning THERON by name, belong to THERON too (*f*)? The *Ninevites*, from the leaſt to the greateſt, made particular application to themſelves.

PAUL. The Law curſes none but thoſe who have already broken it; and the Goſpel pardons none but thoſe who have already complied with it. THERON has already broken the Law, and fallen under the curſe: let THERON comply with the Goſpel, and he ſhall be entitled to the bleſſing. The curſe of the Law was not yours, till you

(*e*) John vi. 32—57.
(*f*) HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 306.

broke it: Nor are the bleſſings of the Goſpel yours, till you comply with it. For it is written, "He that believeth not, is con-"demned already." A truth, which all unbelievers, from the leaſt even unto the greateſt, ſhould, after the example of the *Ninevites*, make particular application of to themſelves. I muſt therefore, ſtill repeat it, What warrant from the word of God have you for your Faith?

THER. *Moſes* led the whole congregation of *Iſrael*, at the ſide of the red-ſea, though the greateſt part of them were in a graceleſs ſtate, to call God THEIR GOD (*g*). — And to confirm them in this belief, God himſelf, from mount *Sinai*, and generally through all the Law of *Moſes*, ſays, ſpeaking to the whole congregation, "I am the "Lord THY GOD (*h*)." And in the days of *Jeremiah*, when there was ſcarce a good man to be found among them (*i*); and the generality were devoted to Idolatry, and obſtinately impenitent; yet, to the whole nation God ſays, "Turn, O back-"ſliding children; for I am married unto "you (*k*)." And he teaches them to ſay, "We come unto thee; for thou art the "Lord OUR God (*l*)." And invites them to look upon him as "their Father (*m*)." And as the *Jews* were all circumciſed at eight

(*g*) Exod. xv. 2. (*h*) Chap. xx. 2.
(*i*) Jer. v. 1. (*k*) Chap. iii. 14.
(*l*) Ver. 22. (*m*) Ver. 4.

days old, and ſo brought into covenant with God, they had all thereby a good warrant to look upon God as their God, and to believe that he was their Father, and would ſave them. The ſame may be ſaid of all baptized perſons in the chriſtian world (*n*).

PAUL. If this proves any thing to your purpoſe, it proves that all the chriſtleſs ſinners in Chriſtendom, how wicked ſoever, although even buried up in popiſh Idolatry, are, if they are baptized, all of them "married to Chriſt, children of God, and heirs "of heaven." Into what ſtrange abſurdities and inconſiſtencies do you run, my dear THERON!

As to circumciſion, the *Jews* in our Saviour's day ſeemed to think that it entitled them to ſalvation. But our Saviour taught them, that notwithſtanding their circumciſion, they were, while unregenerate (*o*), and antecedent to Faith and union with Chriſt, under *condemnation* and *wrath* (*p*). And St *Paul* affirms, that the *Jew*, as well as *Gentile*, notwithſtanding their circumciſion, ſtood "guilty before God," without any title to life, antecedent to their regeneration, and union with Chriſt by a true and living Faith (*q*). And the ſame may be ſaid of thoſe who are baptized.

(*n*) Mr MARSHAL *on Sanctification*, p. 28, 182, 185. Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 312, 343.

(*o*) John iii. 3. (*p*) Ver. 18, 36.

(*q*) Rom. ii. 28, 29. and Chap. iii. 1, 2, 9, 19—28. Gal. iii. 10—29.

As to the texts of ſcripture you refer to, their true ſenſe may be eaſily ſeen, if we conſider God's covenant with *Abraham*; in which he promiſed to be "a God to him "and to his ſeed (*r*)." And God's covenant at mount *Sinai*, in which he took the whole nation to be "his peculiar people (*s*)." From which he calls himſelf "the Lord *their* God:" And on account of which, he is called *their Huſband*, and they are ſaid to be *married* to him, and are charged with *whoredom* and *adultery* for going after other gods; and are invited to return to him, as a *wife* to *her huſband*, and to call him *their God* and *Father*. Not that they had any title to Pardon, Grace and Glory, while "uncircumciſed in "heart (*t*)." With theſe obſervations in mind, it will be eaſy to underſtand the language uſed commonly in the prophets, particularly in *Hoſ.* ii. throughout.

THER. But it is the proper buſineſs of Faith, 'to appropriate and take home to 'ourſelves the grace of God, which lies 'in the common indefinite grant of the 'Goſpel.' Therefore, as Pardon, Grace and Glory are, all of them, given and granted to ſinners, as ſuch; by Faith I, a ſinner, take home theſe bleſſings to myſelf, *i. e.* I believe they are mine (*u*).

(*r*) Gen. xvii. (*s*) Exod. xix.
(*t*) Jer. xxxi. 31, 32. Rom. ii. 28, 29.
(*u*) Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 305, 314—317.

PAUL. Yes. But, my THERON, there is no ſuch abſolute, unconditional grant contained in the Bible.—Nor do the ſcriptures teach, that Faith is of ſuch a nature.

THER. Yes. But St *Paul* declares, that "Faith is the evidence of things not ſeen," and exhibits a clear demonſtration of our right to enjoy them (*x*).

PAUL. "Faith cometh by hearing, and "hearing by the word of God(*y*)." If therefore the word of God gives a ſinner, while out of Chriſt, no abſolute unconditional right to the bleſſings of the Goſpel, Faith can ſee none. Faith cannot ſee what is not, neither can it believe without evidence. All the believers, in St *Paul*'s catalogue, had good evidence for what they believed. But you have no evidence from 'ſcripture, ſenſe, 'or reaſon,' for what you believe; as you yourſelf are obliged to own.

THER. But all thoſe figurative deſcriptions of Faith, which occur in holy writ, imply this appropriating belief (*z*).

PAUL. No, my dear THERON, not one of them.—Is Chriſt viewed, in the beginning of St *John*'s Goſpel, as the Creator of all things, who, under the Moſaic Diſpenſation, ſuſtained the glorious character of "God and King of Iſrael," now come to tabernacle among men, come to his own people, as the promiſed Meſſiah? He is to

(*x*) HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 318. Heb. xi. 1.
(*y*) Rom. x. 17. (*z*) *Dialogues*, p. 320.

be acknowledged, received and honoured according to his character. But — " he " came to his own, and his own received " him not;" — did not own him for the Meſſiah, nor believe in, nor honour him as ſuch. Although he was indeed the very God and King of Iſrael, who of old dwelt in their tabernacle and temple in the form of God, now come to tabernacle in fleſh in the " form of a ſervant:" Yet they rejected him, called him a *Deceiver*, and crucified him for claiming to be the " Son of God " and King of the Jews." But " to as " many as received him," as the promiſed Meſſiah, with all their hearts, " gave he " power to become the ſons of God, even " to as many as believed in his name." Not, that believed their ſins were pardoned without any evidence from ſcripture, ſenſe, or reaſon, — but — that " believed in his " name" — truſted in his mediation, merits and atonement, that through his name they might obtain forgiveneſs of ſins and eternal life (*a*). — Is Chriſt compared to the *brazen Serpent?* We are not to believe that we are healed; but to look to him for healing. — Is he compared to a *Bridegroom?* We are not to believe he is our Huſband; but as chaſte Virgins to be eſpouſed to him, that by this ſpiritual marriage he may become our Huſband. — Is he compared to a *City of refuge?* We are not to believe ourſelves ſafe;

(*a*) John i. 1—12.

but to fly to him for ſafety.—Is he compared to *Bread* and to *Water?* We are not to believe our hunger and thirſt are aſſwaged; but to eat the living Bread and drink the living Water, that they may be ſo.—In a word, is he the *great High-Prieſt*, who has entered into heaven with the blood of atonement in his hand, by and through whom we may come to God for all things, in full aſſurance of acceptance in his name? We are not to believe that Pardon, Grace and Glory are ours; but to draw nigh to God through him, that of God's infinite grace, through him, we may be pardoned, ſanctified, ſaved.

THER. But *David*, *Job*, *Habakkuk*, *Paul*, the council at *Jeruſalem*, yea, all the ſaints in ſcripture, uſe this appropriating language.—They all ſpeak the language of Aſſurance (*b*).

PAUL. And good reaſon why—For they all knew they were ſincere godly men, from a conſciouſneſs to their own inherent graces. —But there is not a ſaint to be found in the Bible, that believes Pardon, Grace and Glory to be his own, without any evidence from 'ſcripture, ſenſe, or reaſon.' Forgive me, Sir, if I ſhould ſay, this kind of Faith the Bible is as great a ſtranger to as to the doctrine of Purgatory.

THER. 'I know no other juſtifying Faith, 'but that which relates to the Goſpel, and

(*b*) Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 325—327.

'believes its report. But here, I find, lies 'the core and root of our controverſy. This 'is the preciſe point to be ſettled; what *it is* to believe(*c*).'

PAUL. No, no, my dear THERON, 'the 'core and root of the controverſy' lies not here. You ought to believe the 'report 'of the Goſpel,' and all the truths of the Goſpel, with a full Aſſurance; yea, with all the full Aſſurance of Faith. But proteſtant writers, for above theſe hundred years, have been teſtifying againſt your kind of Faith, becauſe the thing believed is not contained in the Goſpel. The Goſpel makes no ſuch report. But the thing believed is a lie. Here, my Friend, here lies 'the core and root of the controverſy,' as Mr MARSHAL well knew (*d*); and it is a little ſtrange that your ASPASIO ſhould not know it too.—However, pray tell me what you mean, by believing the report of the Goſpel.

THER. 'The Lord declares by his pro'phet,' "I, even I am he, that blotteth "out thy tranſgreſſions." 'To believe, 'is to ſubſcribe this declaration; to ſub'ſcribe it with our hand, and profeſs with 'our heart,' "Lord, it is done, as thou "haſt ſaid." My tranſgreſſions are blotted out (*e*).

(*c*) Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 328.
(*d*) MARSHAL *on Sanctification*, p. 166.
(*e*) *Dialogues*, p. 329.

PAUL. But my dear THERON, this declaration was made above two thouſand years ago. Do you date your juſtification ſo far back? Or do you think, the words have had any new meaning put to them by God of late; which two thouſand years ago they did not mean?

THER. No. I appropriate and take home the bleſſing to myſelf: And ſo believe the report of the Goſpel.

PAUL. This is not to believe what the Goſpel reports; but rather to make a new Goſpel. This is not to believe the truths already reveaſed; but to make a new revelation. That the tranſgreſſions of THERON, a chriſtleſs ſinner, are blotted out, is not taught in this text, nor in any text in all the ſacred volume, as you yourſelf very well know. And if this be what you mean by an appropriating Faith, then Mr MARSHAL's account of it is very juſt: it is a believing without any evidence, from 'ſcripture, ſenſe, or reaſon (*f*).'

(*f*) The whole party maintain, with *Wendelinus*, that in the firſt direct act of Faith, I believe 'my 'ſins are forgiven.' And the whole party aſſert, that before I believed it, 'my ſins were not forgiven.' Therefore the whole party muſt concede, with Mr MARSHAL, that the thing I believe, 'was not true be-'fore I believed it.' And conſequently, that I do believe it "without any evidence from ſcripture, ſenſe, 'or reaſon.' For if it was not true, there could be no evidence of its truth. And yet the whole party pretend to ground their belief upon ſcripture. So that this is the

THER. But Chriſt has expreſly promiſed, that "according to my Faith, ſo ſhall it be "to me (*g*)."

PAUL. "Believe yè, that I am able to do "this?" ſaid Chriſt to the two blind men, the ſtrangeſt ſcheme of Religion, in this reſpect, that ever was advanced in the chriſtian world.—The thing I believe as true, is not true before I believe it; and yet I believe it becauſe it is true! It is not contained in ſcripture; yet I believe it, becauſe it is contained in ſcripture! I know it is no part of the Goſpel revelation; yet I venture my ſoul upon it for eternity, as the very Goſpel of Chriſt! Now, how do theſe men feel ſatisfied in themſelves, in believing ſuch inconſiſtencies? Why thus—'The Goſpel makes an abſolute, unconditional grant of pardon and ſalvation to all the ſinful race of *Adam*: But I am a ſinner of *Adam*'s race: 'Therefore pardon and ſalvation are mine.'—But then, one would think, they were mine before I believed it, and whether I believed it or no. If the grant doth not make them mine,—why do I believe they are mine? If the grant does make them mine, then they are mine before I believe: And ſo we are not juſtified BY Faith, but BEFORE Faith, contrary to the whole tenor of ſcripture. No, ſay ſome, 'I have by grant 'a common, but not a ſaving intereſt.' But the thing granted is 'ſalvation:' and the grant is abſolute: Therefore 'I ſhall be ſaved.' I ought to believe, that 'I ſhall be ſaved:' Yea, they ſay, I make God a liar, if I do not; but ſurely, if I believe I ſhall be ſaved, I believe I have a ſaving intereſt. And ſo, I believe I have by the grant, what I know is not contained in the grant: and ſo believe 'without any evidence from 'ſcripture, ſenſe, or reaſon.' And yet I ground my belief wholly upon ſcripture.—They ſay, 'The grant 'makes it mine, ſo as to give me a right to believe 'it mine, and claim it, and poſſeſs it as mine.' But then, I ought to believe it mine preciſely in the ſame ſenſe,

(*g*) Mr MARSHAL *on Sanctification*, p. 247. Matt. ix. 29.

who cried, "Thou Son of David, have "mercy on us.—They ſaid unto him,

ſenſe, in which the grant makes it mine. Thus, if the grant makes it mine as being a child of *Adam*; then I ought to believe it mine, as knowing I am a child of *Adam*.—If the grant makes it mine, only as being in Chriſt; then I ought to believe it mine, only as knowing that I am in Chriſt.—If the grant only makes a common intereſt mine; then I ought to believe a common intereſt only to be mine. If the grant makes a ſaving intereſt mine; then I ought to believe a ſaving intereſt mine. And what is mine by grant, if the grant is abſolute, is mine before I believe it, and whether I believe it or not.—No, ſay they, 'It is not 'mine before I believe; and yet I muſt believe it 'mine. I have no evidence from ſcripture; and yet 'my Faith is wholly founded on ſcripture. The ſcrip-'ture ſays no ſuch thing any where; and yet the 'ſcripture plainly ſays this thing in hundreds of places. 'My ſins are not forgiven; and yet I make God a liar 'if I do not believe they are forgiven. It is not true as 'yet, nor do I know it ever will be true; but I muſt 'believe it, without any evidence from ſcripture, ſenſe, 'or reaſon: And in ſo doing I believe the report of 'the Goſpel; although the Goſpel never made ſuch 'a report.' If I can believe all theſe contradictions with all my heart, I am a true believer, and ſhall be ſaved. If not, I am blind, carnal, legal; and finally muſt ſuffer the pains of eternal damnation for my unbelief.—The Infidels of the age (and no wonder Infidelity prevails) ſtand by; hear the diſpute; ſhake their ſides:—The devil ſays, 'So I would have it.'—The daughter of Zion puts on ſackcloth, looks up to heaven, and cries, 'Haſt thou forſaken the earth, 'O Lord! When wilt thou return and ſcatter theſe 'clouds; and cauſe light to break out, ſpread and pre-'vail; and darkneſs and error to flee away! O when 'ſhall that bleſſed day come, that "the knowledge of "the Lord ſhall fill the earth, as the waters cover the "ſea!' When ſhall "Satan be bound, that he may "deceive the nations no more!"

"Yea, Lord." To be ſure, they had ſufficient evidence to believe it, from the miracles he had already wrought. On which our Saviour "touched their eyes: ſaying, Ac-"cording to your Faith be it unto you." —And what, my THERON, is this to your purpoſe, who have no evidence from ſcripture, ſenſe, or reaſon, for what you believe? Our Saviour never told ſinners, that if they would believe, Pardon, Grace and Glory were theirs, it ſhould be unto them according to their Faith: but frequently taught, that many who believed ſo, would finally be diſappointed (*b*).

THER. Yes, our Saviour expreſly ſaid, "What things ſoever ye deſire when ye "pray, believe that ye receive them, and "ye ſhall have them (*i*)."

PAUL. Our Saviour had curſed the barren Fig-tree, and it was "dried up from the "roots." At which his diſciples wondering, our Saviour told them, that whenever they were called to perform any miraculous works, and were looking up to God to do them, they muſt firmly believe he would do the thing, how great ſoever it was, even although as difficult as to "remove a moun-"tain and caſt it into the ſea." And it is plain, they had ſufficient evidence for ſuch a belief: as they knew that God almighty ſtood engaged to effect the miraculous

(*b*) Matt. vii. 21—27. Luke xiii. 24—30.
(*i*) Mr MARSHAL *on Sanctification*, p. 174. Mar. xi. 24.

works, which he had commiſſioned them to declare ſhould be done (*k*).

THER. But the Apoſtle *James* directs all chriſtians, even when praying for divine wiſdom and grace, to "aſk in Faith, nothing wavering (*l*)."

PAUL. To "aſk in Faith"—In the Faith of what? Of truths revealed in the Goſpel, concerning the way of our acceſs to God in the name of Chriſt, our great High-Prieſt, and God's readineſs to hear and anſwer all requeſts, agreeable to his will, put up unto him in his name. Theſe truths ought to be, theſe truths muſt be firmly believed. But in order to our going to God in full Aſſurance of Faith, there is no need, I hope, that we believe as true, things, the truth of which we have no evidence of 'from ſcripture, ſenſe, or reaſon.' Read the ſecond chapter of this Epiſtle, and you may ſee, the Apoſtle *James* was no friend to a preſumptuous Faith, a Faith built on no evidence.

THER. But I am invited in the moſt affectionate manner, to believe that Chriſt loves me and will ſave me, in 2 *Cor.* v. 20. "As though God did beſeech you by us, we "pray you in Chriſt's ſtead, be ye reconciled "to God." 'Hark, it is the voice of infi-'nitely condeſcending love, ſpeaking by his 'ambaſſador — Sinners, accept my great 'ſalvation. Enjoy what I have purchaſed

(*k*) Mar. xi. 20—24.
(*l*) Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 342. Jam. i. 6.

'for you, by my dying Agonies. Do 'not ſuſpect my kindneſs, or refuſe my 'gifts. This will wound me deeper than 'the ſpear which pierced my ſide'—'O 'the grace of our exalted King!—After all 'this, can I entertain the leaſt doubt, whe-'ther I have a permiſſion to believe firm-'ly (*m*)?'—'Did the Judge ever beſeech 'a condemned criminal, to accept of par-'don? Does the creditor beſeech a ruined 'debtor, to receive an acquittance in full? 'Yet our almighty Lord, and our eternal 'Judge, not only vouchſafes to offer theſe 'bleſſings, but invites us—intreats us—'with the moſt tender and repeated impor-'tunity ſolicits us—not to reject them(*n*).'

PAUL. In theſe words you are invited to be reconciled to God; and not to believe that God is reconciled to you. You may be even raviſhed to think of the one, but ſtill be ſo inattentive to the other, as not to take any notice of it, although before you in one of the moſt remarkable texts in the Bible.

THER. But we are ſtrictly commanded by God himſelf, to "believe on the name of "his Son Jeſus Chriſt (*o*);" and have God's promiſe and oath to aſſure us, we ſhall certainly be ſaved if we do (*p*).

(*m*) Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 350.
(*n*) *Dialogues*, Edit. 1ſt. Vol. I. p. 132.
(*o*) 1 John iii. 23. (*p*) *Dialogues*, p. 350—353.

PAUL. True. Yet Chriſt has never taught us, that Faith conſiſts in believing that 'Pardon is mine; Grace is mine; 'Chriſt and all his ſpiritual Bleſſings are 'mine.' But has given us the ſtrongeſt Aſſurance, that many who are very confident of their title to heaven, ſhall finally go to hell (*q*).

THER. Yes, Sir, ſuffer me in my turn to put on the airs of Aſſurance, and to affirm, that this is that very notion of Faith, which was taught, and which was approved as genuine, by our bleſſed Saviour.—For—'our Lord bears this teſtimony con-'cerning *Thomas*; "Thomas, thou haſt "believed." 'Now then, I think, we have 'got an infallible touchſtone. Let us ex-'amine what that is, which Jeſus Chriſt 'calls believing. Whatever it be, it is 'the determination of truth itſelf; and 'ſhould paſs for a verdict, from which 'their lies no appeal. And this, this is 'the confeſſion of *Thomas*,' "My LORD "and my GOD!" 'This, this expreſſes, 'what our divine Maſter calls believing. 'When, therefore, we confeſs with our 'lips, and are perſuaded in our hearts, that 'Jeſus is our Lord, who bought us with his 'blood; that Jeſus is our God, who will exert 'all his adorable perfections for our good; 'then we truly believe. We believe, in our 'Saviour's ſenſe of the word; we have

(*q*) Matt. vii. 22.

'that Faith, which he allows to be genuine (r).'

PAUL. Pray, my dear THERON, as your ALL lies at Stake, your ALL for eternity, do take the Bible, and read the whole paragraph, with the heart of an honeſt man.

THER. I will. Heaven forbid I ſhould act a diſhoneſt part, in an affair of ſuch infinite importance! — (s) "But Thomas, "one of the twelve, — was not with them "when Jeſus came. (t) The other diſci- "ples therefore ſaid unto him, We have "ſeen the Lord. But he ſaid unto them, "Except I ſhall ſee in his hands the print "of the nails, and put my finger into the "print of the nails, and thruſt my hand "into his ſide, I will not believe. *ver.* 26. "And after eight days, again his diſciples "were within, and Thomas with them. "Then came Jeſus, the doors being ſhut, "and ſtood in the midſt, and ſaid, Peace be "unto you. (u) Then ſaid he to Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my "hands; and reach hither thy hand, and "thruſt it into my ſide: And be not faith- "leſs, but believing. (x) And Thomas "anſwered, and ſaid unto him, My Lord "and my God! (y) Jeſus ſaid unto him, "Thomas, becauſe thou haſt ſeen me, thou "haſt

(r) Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 229, 230.
(s) John xx. 24. (t) Ver. 25. (u) Ver. 27.
(x) Ver. 28. (y) Ver. 29.

" haſt believed: Bleſſed are they that have " not ſeen, and yet have believed."

PAUL. No comment is needed. It is impoſſible the ſenſe of the words can be made plainer. The thing that *Thomas* was ſo faithleſs about, was not his particular intereſt in Chriſt; nor was this the thing he believed, that Chriſt died for him in particular. But the reſurrection of Chriſt was the thing, the only thing in queſtion with him. Over-joyed to ſee him, feel him, hear him, know him,—in the language of fervent love, ready to claſp him in his arms, he cries out, "My Lord " and my God!" Thus then ſtands the argument: Becauſe *Thomas* believed that Chriſt was riſen from the dead, on the cleareſt evidence; therefore juſtifying Faith conſiſts in believing, that 'Pardon is 'mine; Grace is mine; Chriſt and all his 'ſpiritual Bleſſings are mine;' without any evidence at all from 'ſcripture, ſenſe, or 'reaſon.' My dear THERON, was ever book abuſed and perverted in this apoſtate world one half ſo much as is the holy Bible!

THER. But is it not true, with relation to every ſinner, and ſo with relation to me, that 'Chriſt has bought me with his blood, 'and will exert all his adorable perfections 'for my good?'

PAUL. Muſt I again put you in mind of what your favourite Author ſo plainly affirms? 'We have no abſolute promiſe or 'declaration in ſcripture, that God cer-'tainly will or doth give Chriſt and his 'ſalvation to any one of us in particular; 'neither do we know it to be true already, 'by ſcripture, ſenſe, or reaſon, before we 'aſſure ourſelves of it. Our Aſſurance 'is not impreſſed by any evidence of the 'thing; but we muſt work it out in our-'ſelves by the aſſiſtance of the Spirit of 'God.' And that your ASPASIO not only likes the book in general, but heartily approves of this paſſage in particular, you may be aſſured from the notice he has taken of it, in his *Preface* to Mr MARSHAL's *Myſtery*, &c.

THER. Yes. And I approve it too. For I never ſuppoſed it was any where taught in ſcripture, that 'Chriſt has bought me 'with his blood, and will exert all his 'adorable perfections for my good,' and ſo certainly ſave me in particular. I know, there is no ſuch thing affirmed in ſcripture. I never pretended there was. And you have miſrepreſented our ſcheme, in ſuppoſing it follows from what we affirm of the free grant of the Goſpel, that we are juſtified, adopted, and entitled to eternal glory before we believe. We hold no ſuch thing. There is no ſuch thing revealed in the oracles of truth. And in-

deed if there was, I ſhould not need any ſpecial aſſiſtance of the Spirit in the work of believing. That I ſhould be ſaved, would be as plain a truth as any other in the Bible. And did I believe the ſcriptures to be true, I could not doubt of this, any more than of any other plain truth therein contained. Whereas, you know, it is impoſſible for a man, although he is ſatisfied the Bible is the word of God, merely by his own ſtrength and reaſon to bring himſelf to believe, unleſs the Spirit, firſt, "witneſſes "with his ſpirit that he is a child of God." Becauſe, before this, we have no evidence of the thing from ſcripture, ſenſe, or reaſon. But when 'the divine Spirit brings 'Chriſt and his righteouſneſs nigh unto 'us, in the promiſe of the Goſpel; clearing at the ſame time our right and warrant to intermeddle withal, without fear 'of vicious intromiſſion;' then we can appropriate what lies in the general promiſe to ourſelves in particular: And then we can ſay, 'Pardon is mine; Grace is mine; 'Chriſt and all his ſpiritual Bleſſings are 'mine.' And then we can ſee 'our title 'perfectly clear (z).'

PAUL. O my dear THERON! and thus, at laſt, you give up your warrant from the written word (a); as in fact there is no

(z) HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 295, 362.

(a) You give up your warrant from the written word—By the firſt direct act of Faith, antecedent to any reflection, I believe that "God is reconciled to

ſuch thing contained in the Bible; and now your recourſe is to the Spirit.—But, if in fact the written word gives you no warrant for this belief,—if in fact you have no right by the Bible to lay this claim, the Spirit of God has nothing to do in the caſe. He cannot clear up a right, where there is no right to be cleared up. He cannot clear up a warrant where there is no warrant to be cleared up. I grant, it is the office of the holy Spirit to open our underſtandings to underſtand the ſcriptures, and to "open our eyes to behold "the wonderful things in God's Law." But it is not the office of the holy Spirit to open our eyes to ſee truths in the Bible, which, in fact, are not there. It is not the office of the holy Spirit to make us believe a lie; that is, believe that the Bible teaches what in fact it does not teach; or to make us new revelations, no where con-

'me.' (*Dialogues*, p. 169, 362)—If this ſuppoſed truth was contained in and taught by the written word, it was true before I believed it—as all grant. And ſo God was 'reconciled to me' before the firſt act of Faith. But they ſay, it was not contained there, it was not true, God was not "reconciled to me' before I believed. But God's word does not warrant me to believe, as truth, any propoſition, the truth of which is not taught in his word. All the truths contained in his word, I ought to believe. But I have no right to add or diminiſh, *Deut.* xii. 32. "Thou ſhalt not add "thereto, nor diminiſh from it." *Rev.* xxii. 18. "If "any man ſhall add unto theſe things, God ſhall add "unto him the plagues that are written in this book." If we add to God's word, we have no warrant from God's word to believe our additions to be divine. If any doubt of this, let them read 2 *Theſſ.* ii. 11.

tained in ſcripture, on which to venture our ſouls for eternity. Nor is it the buſineſs of Faith, to believe theſe new unſcriptural revelations, but only to believe with all our hearts the truths already revealed. Or, to uſe your own words, 'I know no other 'juſtifying Faith, but that which relates 'to the Goſpel, and believes its report.'—But here, Sir, lies the wound of your Faith, and this is 'the core and root of 'the controverſy,' that the thing which you believe is not revealed in the Bible, nor is there any evidence from ſcripture of the truth of it. And this you know—this you own—and yet ſtill will perſiſt in believing it, 'without any evidence from ſcripture, ſenſe, 'or reaſon.' And to help yourſelf out, you call in the aid of the holy Spirit, to teſtify to a thing unrevealed, to a lie, a known lie; to teſtify that ſomething is contained in ſcripture, which you know is not contained there—That with full Aſſurance you may ſay, 'Pardon is mine; Grace is mine; 'Chriſt and all his ſpiritual Bleſſings are 'mine—conſigned over to me in the ever-'laſting Goſpel'—a title perfectly clear,'—'without any evidence from ſcripture, ſenſe, 'or reaſon (*b*).'

O my dear THERON!—In Matters of this importance, it does not become us to

(*b*) Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 269, 362. MARSHAL *on Sanctification*, p. 173.

ſooth and flatter; but to ſpeak the truth in uprightneſs. Did you profeſs to be an Antinomian, and openly declare, 'that the 'elect were juſtified from eternity, or at 'leaſt from the death of Chriſt; that the 'holy Spirit reveals to the elect their juſ-'tification in God's own time; and that 'juſtifying Faith conſiſts in believing this 'new revelation;' then your ſcheme, however inconſiſtent with ſcripture, would ſeem, at leaſt, to be conſiſtent with itſelf. But now, as you ſtate things, you are (forgive me my THERON) you are, I ſay, neither conſiſtent with ſcripture, nor with yourſelf. And your dreſſing up experimental Religion in this light (while Arminians, Pelagians, Socinians, and Infidels laugh at the deluſion) tends only to embolden ſelf-confident hypocrites; and to leave the poor awakened ſinner, that has any common honeſty in his heart, in a more bewildered caſe than ever. Or if, by your charming and affectionate manner of addreſs, the poor blind ſinner is induced to believe you, he is in infinite danger of being led to ſettle on a falſe foundation, to his eternal ruin. For, having once believed,—O dreadful thought! —having once believed, he muſt never doubt again. He muſt watch and pray, fight and ſtrive againſt doubts, with all his might, as the dreadful *Agag*, that muſt be purſued with fire and ſword (*c*). That being

(*c*) Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 342, 343.

once deluded, it is a thouſand to one, but he lives and dies in his deluſion!

THER. But does not the holy ſcripture expreſly ſpeak of the "witneſs and ſeal of "the Spirit (*d*)?"

PAUL. Yes, it does. But never—never—as what any had before Faith and Juſtification: as is the caſe with you. "Ye were "ſealed," ſays the Apoſtle to the *Epheſian* ſaints. But when? Before they believed? No. "AFTER that ye believed, ye were "ſealed (*e*)." And had they this Spirit of adoption before they were already children? No. But, "becauſe ye are ſons"—becauſe ye are already members of God's family, therefore, "God hath ſent forth the Spirit "of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, "Father (*f*)."

So that I muſt needs tell you, my dear THERON, there is not one tittle in the Bible to countenance your ſcheme: But it is all-over inconſiſtence, falſhood and deluſion. And if your heart is no better than your head, you are in an infinitely dreadful ſtate. What your heart is, I do not pretend to ſay. This does not belong to my province. But the ſcheme of Religion you plead for, leads directly to deſtruction. And would that pilot be eſteemed an honeſt man, who, for fear of giving offence, ſhould

(*d*) Rom. viii. 16. Eph. i. 13.
(*e*) Eph. i. 13. (*f*) Gal. iv. 6.

ſit ſilent, and ſuffer the ſhip to run upon the rocks,—rocks under water, which, he knew would daſh the ſhip to pieces in a moment, if not avoided?

THER. But—is it not impoſſible, to truſt in Chriſt, unleſs firſt we believe that Chriſt and all his ſpiritual bleſſings are ours (*g*)?"

PAUL. What would you think, my dear THERON, of a Neonomian, or Arminian, to whom you were opening the way of ſalvation by free grace through Jeſus Chriſt, if he ſhould thus reply? 'It is impoſſible to 'truſt in Chriſt and free grace, unleſs firſt, 'for our encouragement, we are conſcious 'our lives are reformed, our ſins repented of, 'and that we are diſpoſed ſincerely to endea-'vour to do our duty. Were I thus pre-'pared, I ſhould dare to truſt in Chriſt, 'and could hope that God would accept me 'through him. But without theſe good 'qualifications, it is impoſſible I ſhould 'dare to truſt in Chriſt.'

THER. I ſhould ſuppoſe, that his own righteouſneſs was really at the bottom of his Faith, and the very thing that encouraged him to believe. And ſuch a man does not ſo properly truſt in Chriſt, as in his own righteouſneſs. And a Faith built on a falſe foundation, is certainly a falſe Faith.

PAUL. And pray, my THERON, what is it that encourages you to truſt in Chriſt? Not any truths revealed in the Goſpel;

(*g*) Mr. HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 312.

but ſomething of which you have no evidence from ſcripture, ſenſe, or reaſon. A firm perſuaſion of this emboldens you to truſt in Chriſt: yea, is ſo entirely the foundation of your truſt, that it appears to you impoſſible, without this previous perſuaſion, ever to truſt in him. Wherefore, this perſuaſion is at the bottom of your truſt. And, ſtrictly ſpeaking, you do not ſo properly truſt in Chriſt, as in that perſuaſion. Should you now be convinced, that this perſuaſion was a mere deluſion, your truſting in Chriſt would ceaſe in a moment. Juſt as it is with a ſelf-righteous perſon, when his eyes are opened to ſee himſelf. "The commandment "came, ſin revived, and I died (*b*)."

THER. But, 'would any perſon, of the 'leaſt prudence, erect his houſe upon a 'piece of ground, without a previous con-'viction that the ſpot was his own (*i*)?'

PAUL. Wherefore then we muſt thus conclude, that all the truths, already plainly revealed in the Goſpel, which are true before we believe them, and whether we believe them or not;—that all theſe truths laid together, although clearly underſtood, ſeen in their ſpiritual glory, firmly believed, approved of and liked, would not be ſufficient to encourage a ſinner to truſt in Chriſt; *i. e.* There is nothing in the written word,

(*b*) Rom. vii. 9.
(*i*) *Dialogues*, Edit. 1ſt, Vol. III. p. 285.

which, let it be ever ſo well underſtood, and ever ſo firmly believed, is ſufficient to encourage even a regenerate ſinner (for it is plain, regeneration is before the firſt act of Faith (*k*), to truſt in Chriſt. To ſupply this defect, we muſt firſt believe, as truth, what as yet is not true, and that without any evidence, from ſcripture, ſenſe, or reaſon. And this belief, this perſuaſion, is to be the foundation of our truſting in Chriſt; ſo entirely the foundation, that without it we cannot 'with the leaſt prudence' truſt in him. And the weight, the whole weight of our eternal ſalvation is at bottom laid, not on the Goſpel, the written Goſpel; but on a ſuppoſed truth, we have no evidence of, from ſcripture, ſenſe, or reaſon.

O, my dear THERON! This is a precarious foundation, to venture your precious, your immortal ſoul upon. And ſhould it give way and break under you, it might let you fall down into eternal ruin. This, this is indeed, to uſe your ASPASIO's beautiful ſimilitude, 'like placing the dome of a 'cathedral on the ſtalk of a tulip.'

Mean while let me tell you, the inſpired Apoſtles verily believed, that in the written word we have, not only full evidence of the truth of the goſpel itſelf (*l*), but alſo, the truth of the Goſpel being ſeen, ſufficient encouragement to come to God through Chriſt, in full Aſſurance of being accepted

(*k*) John i. 12, 13. (*l*) John xx. 31.

through him (*m*). And on this ground they preached the Goſpel to the world, inviting all to return to God through Jeſus Chriſt; without ever giving the leaſt intimation of any need of their being previouſly perſuaded of ſome things, as truths, which were no where plainly contained in the Goſpel.

THER. Pray, what is there contained in the Goſpel, which may be ſufficient to encourage a ſinner to return to God through Chriſt, with full Aſſurance of acceptance through him?

PAUL. Theſe three truths are ſet in the cleareſt and ſtrongeſt light, in the glorious Goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt.

(1.) That the goodneſs of God, the ſupreme Governor of the world, is ſelf-moving, and infinite. It needs no external motive, no goodneſs in us, to draw it forth into exerciſe. Yea, it can ſurmount infinite ill deſert,—ſelf-moved. This is demonſtrated in God's giving his Son, of his own mere motion, to die for a world ſo ill-deſerving,—infinitely ill-deſerving,—that no atonement appeared to him ſufficient to ſecure the honour of his Law and Government, but the blood of his own Son. Let me believe with all my heart that God has done this deed, a deed infinitely ſuperior to the creation of millions of ſuch worlds as this, all which, with one word's ſpeaking, Meſſiah could have created in a moment. I

(*m*) Heb. x. 19—22.

ſay, let me believe with all my heart, that God of his own mere motion, has given his Son, one equal to himſelf, to die for ſuch a world as this; and at once I have the fulleſt conviction of his ſelf-moving goodneſs, and infinite grace. It ſtands in a light brighter than the ſun at noon day.

(2.) God can, conſiſtently with the honour of himſelf, of his Law and Government, and ſacred authority, pardon and ſave thoſe, who, ſtrictly ſpeaking, are infinitely ill-deſerving, through Jeſus Chriſt his Son. His honour is, in every point of light, effectually ſecured by the mediation and death of his Son. The dignity, the infinite dignity of the Son of God, proves this to the enlightened ſoul. The reſurrection of Chriſt from the dead, is a viſible demonſtration of it. And God himſelf, in plain words, declares it to be true: — That he can now be "juſt, "and yet juſtify him that believeth in Jeſus (*n*)." Now, if the goodneſs of the divine nature is infinite and ſelf-moving; and if he can, conſiſtently with his own honour, pardon and ſave the infinitely ill-deſerving through Jeſus Chriſt his Son; the only queſtion that remains is, Who may, among all the ſons of *Adam*, truſt in this glorious Mediator, return home to God through him, and through his merits and atonement look to the free grace of God for pardon and eternal life? But,

(*n*) Rom. iii. 24—26.

(3.) It is moſt expreſly declared, that "whoſoever will, may come (o);" and "he "that cometh ſhall in no wiſe be caſt out (p)." Yea, orders are given, that theſe glad tidings ſhould be carried all round the world, "the Goſpel preached to every creature (q). And all, even the vileſt and the worſt, are to be, as it were, "compelled to come in (r), "prayed and beſeeched to be reconciled to "God (s), to repent and be converted (t)," to return home to God through Jeſus Chriſt, —to God, who is as ready to be reconciled to the returning ſinner, as the Father of the prodigal is repreſented to be to his returning ſon (u).

Now, when the ſinner's eyes, in regeneration, are opened, to "behold as in a glaſs "the glory of the Lord," it will immediately appear to him the fitteſt and happieſt thing in the world, to return home to God, and be for ever devoted to him, if he may. And a clear ſight and firm belief of theſe plain Goſpel-truths gives him the fulleſt Aſſurance that he may; that it is God's will he ſhould; and that God ſtands ready to accept him through Jeſus Chriſt, if he does (x).

(o) Rev. xxii. 17. (p) John vi. 37.
(q) Mark xvi. 15. (r) Luke xiv. 23.
(s) 2 Cor. v. 20. (t) Acts iii. 19.
(u) Luke xv. 20.

(x) Except my eyes are firſt opened to behold the Glory of God, I cannot ſee the ground and reaſon of the

Indeed, I readily grant, that unregenerate ſinners do neither ſee the infinite amiableneſs the Law, nor heartily approve it as holy, juſt and good. Unleſs the Law appears good and glorious, I cannot ſee the wiſdom of God in the death of his Son, nor cordially believe the Goſpel to be true, I am blind to the only door of hope. Seeing that merely a ſight of the glory of God as the righteous Law-giver, and of the glory of his holy Law, can give no hope. The truth of the Goſpel is the only foundation of hope.—When the truth of the Goſpel is ſeen, I then behold, (1.) The love, the ſelf-moving goodneſs of God, in the gift of his Son: but not that he loves *me* in particular, and is reconciled to *me*. (2.) I then ſee, that Chriſt has ſecured the honour of the divine government; and that now God can be juſt, and yet juſtify the ſinner that believeth in Jeſus: but not that I am *one* for whom *he* died with an abſolute deſign to ſave. (3.) I then ſee that any ſinner may *return* to God thro' Chriſt; and ſee that thoſe who *do*, will be accepted and ſaved: but not that 'pardon is mine, grace is 'mine, Chriſt and all his ſpiritual bleſſings are mine.' In a word, I ſee the truth of what is *already* revealed in the Goſpel; but I don't ſee truths *not* revealed there. The holy Spirit helps me to ſee the truths already revealed, but reveals no *new* truths. The things which I believe, were true *before* I believed them. —If, after all, any pretend, 'there is *no difference* between 'theſe two kinds of Faith;' I only ſay, if theſe two two kinds of Faith, like two roads, which ſeem, and *but* ſeem, to lead the ſame way, ſhould in fact lead to two different worlds, as far aſunder as heaven and hell; it is proper to ſet up theſe monuments to *warn* travellers: and the nearer they are *alike*, the more need poor travellers have to *take heed* they do not miſtake. But if they do, if they will miſtake *after* warning, their "blood will be upon their own heads;" and they will eternally remember, that they *knew* what they believed was *not* revealed in Scripture: they believed without *any* evidence 'from ſcripture, ſenſe or reaſon.'

of God, nor really believe the Goſpel to be true. The "vail is on their hearts (*y*)." The Goſpel "is hid from them (*z*)." They are *blind* (*a*). And their blindneſs is a vicious, wicked blindneſs, ariſing from a heart void of love to God, and full of enmity againſt his Law, and againſt the glorious Goſpel of his Son; as was proved in our former converſation. And in this benighted ſtate, being followed with the fears of eternal miſery, they muſt take ſome way for hope and comfort. Some go about to eſtabliſh their own righteouſneſs; and on that build their hopes for heaven. Others, finding no comfort in the way of duties, try to work up themſelves to a belief that Chriſt died for them in particular, that God loves them, and will ſave them. And if by any means they come to feel a ſtrong perſuaſion of this, it ſo delivers them from their fears, and ſo fills them with comfort and joy, that they do all they can to ſtrengthen this perſuaſion: And to this end, apply an hundred texts of ſcripture, perverting them from their plain and natural meaning. And are yet obliged at laſt to own, that they have no evidence on which to ground their belief, from ſcripture, ſenſe, or reaſon: Yea, that the thing they believe, is not true, till it becomes true by their believing it to be true. However,

(*y*) 2 Cor. iii. 16. (*z*) Matt. xi. 25.
(*a*) Rom. xi. 25.

their conſciences being quieted by this belief, they can now go on, eſtranged from a God of infinite glory, blind to his infinite beauties: Nor do they believe, that ever any did love God for his own infinite lovelineſs; although this is the very ſpirit of all the angels and ſaints in heaven, and of all good men upon earth (*b*).

THER. I ſee you are returned again to your darling topic, the doctrine of loving God for his own lovelineſs.

(*b*) Iſai. vi. 3. 2 Cor. iii. 18.

To make the matter, if poſſible, ſtill plainer, it may be thus ſtated: *Firſt*, He that is encouraged to come to Chriſt from a conſciouſneſs of ſome good qualification in himſelf, ſecretly builds his hopes of acceptance with God on his *own* righteouſneſs. *Secondly*, He that is encouraged to come to Chriſt from a belief that Chriſt died for him *in particular*, and that God is reconciled to him, builds his hopes of acceptance with God on a *deluſion*. *Thirdly*, He that comes to Chriſt without a diſpoſition to be reconciled to God, is only ſeeking after ſalvation from hell; and does not deſire the ſalvation which the Goſpel offers. *Fourthly*, He that thinks he has a diſpoſition to be reconciled to God, but never ſaw the glory of God, of his Law and Government, he but *deceives* himſelf. *Fifthly*, He that is encouraged to come, only by the free grace of God thro' Jeſus Chriſt, as revealed in the written word, builds his hopes of acceptance on the *truth*. He that comes on *this* encouragement, with a hearty diſpoſition to be for ever reconciled to God and devoted to him, and thirſting for ever for grace to live to him, is a true convert. He that, after this, lives to God thro' all trials, proves his *Faith* by his *Works*, as *Abraham* did, *Gen.* xxii. 12.

PAUL. Yes. And this is the very vitals of vital piety. A ſenſe of the beauty of the divine nature, and a firm belief of the truth of the Goſpel, lay the foundation for all the reſt. "Repentance towards God, "Faith towards our Lord Jeſus Chriſt (*c*)," a life of communion with God and devotedneſs to him, joy in God, and rejoicing in Jeſus Chriſt. And while the love of God, —not a belief that God loves me in particular, without any evidence from ſcripture, ſenſe, or reaſon, but a clear and lively ſenſe of the ſelf-moving goodneſs and infinite grace of God, as manifeſted in the gift of his Son, and ſhining forth in the whole Goſpel-way of life, as exhibited in the written word,—" is ſhed abroad in our hearts by "the holy Ghoſt;" attended with a full Aſſurance that we are the children of God, reſulting from a conſciouſneſs of a filial ſpirit towards God; now we "know and "believe the love that God hath to us." And, inſpired with a ſenſe of the divine glory, the beauty of God's Law and Government, the glory of the way of ſalvation by free grace through Jeſus Chriſt, the free and ſovereign grace of God in calling us into the kingdom of his Son, "we rejoice "with joy unſpeakable and full of glory:" And habitually and actually, through the courſe of our lives, "preſent ourſelves a "living ſacrifice to God" through Jeſus

(*c*) John xvii. 3.

Chriſt; to be for him, intirely for him, and that for ever. Nor do we feel any need to bring your kind of Faith into the account.

You remember, my dear THERON, that parabolical picture of a true ſaint, of a real chriſtian, given by our bleſſed Saviour, in *Matt.* xiii, 23. whoſe repreſentations, if we do not believe, we do indeed make God a liar. "He that received ſeed into the good "ground, is he"—not that hath a new revelation of a new truth not contained in the Goſpel!—but, "is he that heareth the "word, and"—what next? Not is really perſuaded in his heart, that 'Pardon is mine, 'Grace is mine, Chriſt and all his ſpiritual 'Bleſſings are mine, without any evidence 'from ſcripture, ſenſe, or reaſon!'—But—"heareth the word, and UNDERSTANDETH "IT"—ſo as in it to behold, as in a glaſs, the glory of the Lord.—"Which "alſo"—what? complains that his graces are no more to be ſeen 'than the ſtars at 'noon!' No—what then? "Which alſo "beareth FRUIT."—How much? So little that no eye can ſee it? or at moſt, but juſt diſcern it, 'as a glow-worm in the night?' and that in ſo unſteady, uncertain a manner, that for his life he cannot tell whether there be any fruit or no; but rather the more he looks the more his doubts are increaſed (*d*)?—No, no—far from this—"and bringeth forth, "ſome a HUNDRED FOLD, ſome SIXTY,

(*d*) Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 361, 362.

" ſome THIRTY." Yes, my THERON, that is good ground indeed, which yields an hundred buſhels of grain, for one that was ſown; or ſixty, or even thirty. And thus, " the grain of muſtard-ſeed—becometh a " great tree(*e*)." And thus the leaven ſpreads " till the whole is leavened (*f*)." And this is the idea, the grand and noble idea, our bleſſed Saviour had of a true chriſtian! It is granted, there is a great difference in the degrees of fruitfulneſs in true converts, ſome " an hundred fold, ſome ſixty, ſome " thirty." But thoſe who bring forth no good fruit, whatever raviſhing joys they may ſometimes have had (*g*), are by our bleſſed Saviour pictured by the ſimilitude of —" Stony-ground,—Thorny-ground."

THER. But I have an unanſwerable objection againſt this account of the nature of juſtifying Faith. For, whereas in the holy ſcriptures it is repreſented to be an exceeding difficult thing to believe; according to you, there is no difficulty at all in it, when once the ſinner, in your ſenſe of things, is regenerate, and believes the Goſpel to be true with all his heart.

PAUL. Right, my dear THERON. The difficulty is now over. For he is not obliged to believe ' without any evidence from ' ſcripture, ſenſe, or reaſon.' The way in which he is to return to God all lies open, plain before him. And it appears to him

(*e*) Matt. xiii. 31, 32. (*f*) Ver. 33. (*g*) Ver. 20.

the fitteſt and happieſt thing in the world, to return home to God through Jeſus Chriſt. And he does it with all his heart (*b*).

THER. Wherein then conſiſts the difficulty of believing?

PAUL. The difficulty in the way of embracing the Goſpel in a ſaving manner, according to the New Teſtament, ariſes from —a worldly Spirit, a ſelf-righteous Spirit, and being dead in Sin.

(1.) From a worldly Spirit. Men are generally ſo attached to worldly things, riches, honour and pleaſure, that, although they might be glad to know they ſhould go to heaven when they die, yet they have no

(*b*) *Return home to God.* —By this phraſe PAULINUS means exactly the ſame with thoſe words in *Jer.* iv. 1. "If thou wilt RETURN, O Iſrael, ſaith the Lord, re-"turn unto me." And in *Ezek.* xxxiii. 11. "Turn "ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye "die!" And in *Acts* iii 19. "Repent and be con-"verted, that your ſins may be blotted out." From being enemies, repent and turn, and *be reconciled to God*, 2 Cor. v. 20. It is worthy to be obſerved, that according to St *Peter*, Repentance is *before* Forgiveneſs; "Repent and be converted, that your ſins MAY "be blotted out." And this is the doctrine God has taught in all ages of the world. By *Moſes*, Lev xxvi. 40. By *David*, Pſal. xxxii 5. By *Iſaiah*, Iſa. lv. 7. By *John* Baptiſt, *Mark* i. 4. By Chriſt, *Matt.* v. 4. *Luke* xiii. 3. By all the Apoſtles, on the day of Pentecoſt, *Acts* ii. 37—39. and indeed *all over* the Scripture.—But there is nothing of the nature of Repentance *before* Forgiveneſs in THERON's ſcheme. Yea, his Repentance, profeſſedly, ariſes wholly from a belief that his ſins are forgiven. So that he is forgiven *before he begins* to repent.

heart to become the disciples of Christ; to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow him; and take God for the alone portion of their souls. Therefore when they are invited to come to this feast, (and a feast indeed it is, to a regenerate sinner, whose eyes are open to see things as they are) they desire to be *excused*. And they "make "light of it, and go their ways, one to "his farm, another to his merchandize (*i*)."

(2.) From a self-righteous Spirit (*k*).—For if a sinner is so terrified with the fears of eternal damnation, that he can take no comfort in worldly enjoyments; and so is quite prepared to hear ASPASIO urge him to believe that God loves him, and Christ died for him; yet there now remains the chief difficulty in the way of true Faith, unremoved, *viz.* to yield the point, that the Law not only does in fact require sinless perfection on pain of eternal damnation, and that he is under the curse of this Law, but that this Law is holy, just and good: and so he justly condemned, and in fact in the hands, and at the disposal of a sovereign God. This, this, a proud, self-righteous spirit is diametrically opposite unto. And to be brought to this is killing work. "The commandment came, sin revived, and "I died (*l*)."

(*i*) Luke xiv. 18. Matt. xxii. 5.
(*k*) Rom. ix. 31—33. (*l*) Rom. vii. 9.

(3.) From being ſpiritually Dead. For when the Law has thoroughly done its work, and the ſinner ſees and feels the truth, that he is dead in ſin, juſtly condemned, abſolutely helpleſs and undone in himſelf, in the hands of a ſovereign God, who "hath mercy on whom he will "have mercy,"—there now needs the ſame mighty power whereby Chriſt was raiſed from the dead, to quicken this dead ſinner. And it muſt wholly proceed from the mere free ſovereign grace of God (*m*). That regeneration does thus precede the firſt act of Faith, is plain from *John* i. 12, 13. where concerning all true believers it is ſaid, "which "WERE born"—that is, antecedent to the firſt act of Faith—"which WERE born, not "of blood, nor of the will of the fleſh, nor "of the will of man, but of God (*n*)."

But theſe three difficulties being removed, and ſinners made "willing in the day of his "power (*o*)," all is eaſy. Sinners now *come flying* to Chriſt, as naturally, "as doves to "their windows (*p*)." For God appears to be infinitely glorious, and the Goſpel to be divinely true.

And here, by the way, my dear THERON, it is worthy of your diligent attention, that it is a common thing in the New Teſtament, to promiſe ſalvation to thoſe, who believe

(*m*) Eph. i. 19, 20. compared with Eph. ii. 1—8.
(*n*) *See alſo* John iii. 3, 5.
(*o*) Pſal. cx. 3. (*p*) Iſai. lx. 8.

the truth of the Goſpel with all their hearts, and to ſpeak of ſuch as true ſaints: Becauſe where this is, every thing elſe will follow of courſe. In this view, you may at your leiſure read the following ſcriptures (*q*).

THER. The clock ſtrikes nine—It is time for me to retire. However, before I go, pray point out, in brief, the chief differences between what you call true Faith, and the Faith I have been pleading for, that I may have them to conſider at my leiſure. For I deſign more thoroughly to look into this matter than ever yet I have done.

PAUL. Among the many differences which might be mentioned, I will only point out theſe Twelve.

I. Regeneration is neceſſarily previous to the firſt act of true Faith. But your Faith may exiſt in an unregenerate heart.

II. True Faith ſuppoſes, the Law and Goſpel are rightly underſtood, and beheld in their glory; the Law approved with all the heart, as holy juſt and good; the Goſpel believed, and complied with, with all the heart. But your Faith is conſiſtent with a reigning enmity againſt both Law and Goſpel.

(*q*) Matt. xvi. 16, 17. Mark xvi. 15, 16. John vi. 68, 69. and xvii. 3, 8. and xx. 30, 31. Acts viii. 37. Rom. x. 9. 1 Cor. xii. 3. 1 John iv. 15. and v. 1, 5. Some of which are ſadly perverted by ſome writers; particularly *Rom.* x. 9.

Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 291. *Marrow of modern Divinity*, Notes, p. 155, 156.

III. True Faith is an holy act. But yours has nothing of the nature of holineſs in it; ariſes from no higher principle than ſelf-love.

IV. In true Faith, nothing is believed but what is plainly revealed in the holy ſcriptures. But in your Faith, the main things believed are no where contained in the Bible—'Pardon is mine, Grace is mine, 'Chriſt and all his ſpiritual Bleſſings are 'mine.'

V. In true Faith, the things believed were as true before they were believed as after; being all contained in the ſcriptures of truth. But in your Faith, the things believed were not true before they were believed; not being contained in the Bible.

VI. True Faith is founded wholly on that revelation which is made in the written word. But your Faith, having no ſupport from ſcripture, ſenſe, or reaſon, is founded wholly in a heated imagination; or, which is no better, on a new revelation, not contained in the written word: *i. e.* one is founded on good evidence the other not.

VII. The great difficulty in the way of true Faith, ariſes from the wickedneſs of the heart. But the great difficulty in the way of your Faith is, that there is no evidence of the truth of the thing believed from ſcripture, ſenſe, or reaſon: But rather a man is obliged to go contrary to them all.

VIII. True

VIII. True Faith is wrought in the heart by the holy Spirit, in regeneration, imparting divine life to the dead ſoul, opening the eyes to behold divine truths in their glory and reality: In conſequence of which, the Goſpel is underſtood, believed and embraced with all the heart. But your Faith is wrought by your being made, by ſome means or other, to believe ſome things as true, that are not revealed in ſcripture.

IX. In true Faith, the way of ſalvation by free grace through Jeſus Chriſt, being underſtood and believed, is heartily approved of, and acquieſced in, as being glorious for God, and ſafe for the ſinner: And our entire dependence for acceptance with God, is on the free grace of God through Jeſus Chriſt, as exhibited in the written word. Whereas, your Faith does not properly conſiſt in dependence, but in confidence—not in looking to the free grace of God through Jeſus Chriſt, that you may be pardoned, ſanctified and ſaved; not in flying for refuge, and laying hold on this hope ſet before you; but in being confident, that 'Pardon is mine; Grace is mine; Chriſt 'and all his ſpiritual Bleſſings are mine.' —In being 'really perſuaded in my heart, 'that Chriſt is mine, and that I ſhall have 'life and ſalvation by him;' without any

evidence 'from ſcripture, ſenſe, or rea-'ſon (*r*).'

X. True Faith is always attended with love to God, ariſing from a ſenſe of his own infinite amiableneſs, as its inſeparable concomitant. Your Faith is ſometimes followed with a ſeeming love to God, ariſing merely from believing that he loves you.

XI. But the moſt remarkable difference of all, is, that true Faith actually unites the man to Jeſus Chriſt, as the "Branch is "united to the vine (*s*). In conſequence of which every true believer actually receives the Spirit of Chriſt to "dwell in him (*t*)." In conſequence of this, a certain foundation is laid, to bring forth fruit unto God (*u*) in every inſtance. And (*x*) "the path of the

(*r*) I grant that writers on that ſide of the queſtion ſpeak much of *truſting* in Chriſt, and *reſting* upon him, &c. Yet according to them, *previous* to this truſt, and that which encourages to it, is a belief that 'pardon 'is mine, grace is mine, Chriſt and all his ſpiritual 'bleſſings are mine.' And ſo I believe that my ſins are pardoned, *before* I begin to truſt in Chriſt. I do not *come* to Chriſt, but rather *ſtand off* and keep at a diſtance till I ſee he is *mine*, and can call God *my God*. So that, ſtrictly ſpeaking, I *am* juſtified, and *know that I am* juſtified, before I dare come to Chriſt and truſt in him. Thus the matter is ſtated in the *Dialogues*, p. 312.

(*s*) John xv. 5.

(*t*) Rom. viii. 9. Eph. i. 13. Gal. iii. 2, 14. 1 John iv. 13. and ii. 27. Rom. viii. 14. Gal. v. 18.

(*u*) Rom. vii. 4. (*x*) Matt. xiii. 23.

"juſt is as the ſhining light, which ſhineth "more and more unto the perfect day (*y*). "If he falleth, he riſeth up again (*z*). "Every branch that beareth fruit, God "purgeth it, and ſo it bringeth forth more "fruit (*a*)." Whence, near or quite all the ſaints we read of in ſcripture, uſually ſpeak the language of Aſſurance, as being conſcious to this divine, habitual change wrought in them by God's holy Spirit. But thus it is not with your kind of Faith. Nor is Aſſurance this way to be obtained on your ſcheme.

XII. As a natural conſequence of the whole, the ſeveral ſyſtems of experimental Religion, reſulting from theſe two kinds of Faith, however in appearance they may be

(*y*) Prov. iv. 18. (*z*) Prov. xxiv. 16.

(*a*) John xv. 2. — Altho' it is plain from Scripture, that Regeneration is *before* the firſt act of ſaving Faith, *John* i. 12, 13. and that Faith is wrought by the influences of the holy Spirit, *Eph.* i. 19. yet it is equally plain, that the gift of the holy Spirit, to *dwell* in us, as an *abiding* principle of divine life, is *after* we are united to Chriſt by Faith, *Eph.* i. 13. *Gal.* iii. 14. *After* union to Chriſt we have a covenant right to the holy Spirit, *Gal.* iii. 29. may have divine grace, at any time, for aſking, *Luke* xi. 13. but *before* union with Chriſt, we have *no right*; God is at abſolute liberty; we lie at his ſovereign mercy, *Rom* ix. 15—18. And accordingly, regenerating grace is the effect of his ſovereign good pleaſure, *Matt.* xi. 25, 26. No *promiſes* of ſaving grace are made to the prayers or doings of ſinners *out of* Chriſt, *Gal.* iii. 10. 2 *Cor.* i. 20. *John* iii. 18, 36.

alike, yet in reality are eſſentially different throughout. While the true believer is ſtriving to grow in grace, the falſe pretender is ſtriving to maintain his deluſion.

THER. I thank you, Sir, for preſent inſtructions. And, with your leave, I will return to morrow evening; as I want to hear your thoughts on one Subject more.

PAUL. The evening ſhall be at your ſervice, God willing.

So ended the ſecond Converſation, and I retired again to my cloſet, with what views of my ſpiritual ſtate, you may eaſily gueſs. O, my dear ASPASIO! What! Are we all wrong! Or have I miſunderſtood your ſcheme! I hope, I wiſh: no poor ſinner on earth was ever ſo deluded as I have been: the Lord have mercy on me! O, my dear ASPASIO, that you had been preſent, and heard all that paſſed! But alas, the wide ocean keeps us three thouſand miles apart! However, with you, even now with you, is the diſtreſſed heart of

Your diſconſolate

THERON.

DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE III.

Wedneſday Evening, *Dec.* 13, 1758.

ACcording to appointment, I made my third viſit. The Subject propoſed was the DOCTRINE OF ASSURANCE. We ſoon entered upon it: And this is the ſum of what paſſed.

THER. May the people of God, in this life, attain to a certain Aſſurance that they are in a ſtate of favour with God, and entitled to eternal glory?

PAUL. As there is a ſpecific difference between true grace and all counterfeits; as true grace in the heart is naturally diſcernable, like all our other inward biaſſes; as the ſaints in ſcripture uſually ſpeak the language of Aſſurance; as ſaints in all ages are exhorted to ſeek Aſſurance (*b*); and as there are many rules laid down in ſcripture to determine in this caſe, and many promiſes made for the encouragement of ſaints, the deſigned advantage of which cannot be enjoyed without Aſſurance; ſo, for theſe and other reaſons, I believe, that Aſſurance is

(*b*) 2 Pet. i. 10.

attainable in this life, in all ordinary caſes at leaſt.

THER. How and by what means may the children of God attain Aſſurance?

PAUL. Sanctification, taking the word in a large and comprehenſive ſenſe, is the evidence, the only ſcripture-evidence of a good eſtate.

THER. What do you mean by ſanctification, in this large and comprehenſive ſenſe?

PAUL. It is uſual for divines to diſtinguiſh between regeneration and converſion, between firſt converſion and progreſſive ſanctification, between divine views and holy affections, between grace in the heart and an holy life and converſation; but I mean to comprehend all under one general name. You may call it the image of God, or holineſs of heart and life, or a real conformity to the divine Law, and a genuine compliance with the Goſpel of Chriſt. I have already let you ſee what I apprehend to be the nature of Law and Goſpel, of Love to God, and Faith in Chriſt. When I ſay, this is the only evidence, I mean, that this is the only thing wherein ſaints and ſinners, in every inſtance differ. One has the image of God, the other has not. Or, to expreſs myſelf in the language of inſpiration: (c) "This is "life eternal, to know thee the only true "God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom thou haſt

(c) John xvii. 3.

" ſent." And (*d*) " hereby we do know " that we know him, if we keep his com- " mandments. He that ſaith, I know him, " and keepeth not his commandments, is a " liar, and the truth is not in him. But " whoſo keepeth his word, in him verily is " the love of God perfected: Hereby know " we that we are in him."

THER. What is the beſt method a true ſaint can take, to maintain a conſtant Aſſurance of his good eſtate?

PAUL. To live in the exerciſe of all chriſtian graces in his own heart every day, and to be conſtantly influenced and governed by them in all his external conduct in the world: " Growing in grace, and preſſing " forward to perfection (*e*)."

THER. But is it poſſible, that all true ſaints ſhould live ſo?

PAUL. Why not? For, they are all delivered from the power of ſin (*f*), are married to Chriſt, in whom all fulneſs dwells (*g*), have already every principle of grace in their hearts (*h*), and the Spirit of God actually dwelling in them (*i*), and conſtantly influencing them to ſuch a degree, that they do not, they even cannot, feel and live as others do (*k*), yea, actually carrying on the work

(*d*) 1 John ii. 3, 4, 5.
(*e*) 2 Pet. i. 5—11. (*f*) Rom. vi. 2—14.
(*g*) Rom. vii. 4. (*h*) John i. 15.
(*i*) Rom. viii. 9. (*k*) 1 John iii. 9. " Who- " ever is born of God, doth not commit ſin: for his

of ſanctification (*l*). The God of all grace ready, mean while, to grant all further needful help, as ready as ever a kind parent was to give bread to a hungry child (*m*). So that

" ſeed remaineth in him: and he cannot ſin, becauſe " he is born of God." He *doth not* and he *cannot*, at any time: for his ſeed always *remaineth* in him. So that theſe words teach us, that there is at all times a real difference between a ſaint and a ſinner.

It is true, there is no particular biaſs or inclination, whether natural or gracious, in the heart of man, but may be counteracted. But to counteract the habitual biaſs of the heart, is quite different from acting agreeably to the habitual biaſs of the heart. The ſaint counteracts the habitual biaſs of his heart when he ſins: the ſinner acts agreeable to the habitual biaſs of his whole heart when he ſins. So a ſaint never ſins *with all* his heart, as the wicked man does. He *cannot*, becauſe his ſeed *remains* in him, becauſe he is *born of God*. " The Spirit luſteth againſt the Fleſh;" ſo that he cannot, *Gal.* v. 17.

Therefore good men, when they fall, are *reſtleſs* till they come to Repentance; as was the caſe with *David*, Pſal. xxxii. 3—5. for they are out of their element; " all is vanity and vexation of ſpirit;" as was the caſe with *Solomon*, Eccles. i. 2. As when *Haman* led *Mordecai* thro' the ſtreet of *Shuſhan*, on the king's horſe, dreſſed in royal apparel, and proclaimed his honours in the ears of the people, he acted exceedingly contrary to the habitual biaſs of his heart, *Eſth.* vi. So did *Peter*, when he denied his Maſter; and therefore at *one look* of Chriſt " he went out and wept bitterly." So that theſe inſtances, tho' often alledged, are not to the purpoſe of " ſtony-ground hearers:" for they have *no root* in themſelves. They " receive the word with " joy, endure for a while, and fall away," *Matt.* xiii. 20, 21. *See* Mr *Edwards* on *Religious Affections*, pag. 274—277.

(*l*) John xv. 2. (*m*) Matt. vii. 7—11.

they are completely furniſhed to live daily in the exerciſe of every grace (*n*). Yea, this is expected of them, as they would act up to their proper character (*o*). Yea, I will venture to add, having ſo good an authority as the Son of God, that, though there are different degrees of grace and fruitfulneſs among true ſaints, yet it is their common character, to "bring forth fruit, ſome an "hundred fold, ſome ſixty, ſome thirty (*p*)." So that it ſeems more difficult to reconcile it with ſcripture, that a true ſaint (there being no extraordinary bodily diſeaſe, as the hypochondria, &c. nor other extraordinary circumſtances, that may account for it) ſhould live long in the dark, full of doubts and fears about his ſtate, from year to year; I ſay, more difficult to reconcile this with ſcripture, than it is to prove that they may live ſo as to make their "calling and elec-"tion ſure," according to that exhortation in 2 *Pet.* i. 5—11.

THER. But I have known ſome, eſteemed true converts, who after their converſion have lain dead, without any ſenſible divine influence, for months together.

PAUL. Why did not you add,—and years together? For once I knew of one, counted an eminent chriſtian, who declared he lay dead twelve years, without one act of grace

(*n*) Eph. ii. 10. (*o*) Eph. iv. 1.
(*p*) Matt. xiii. 23.

all that time. But what good do ſuch converſions do? If men are as much under the power of ſpiritual death after their converſions, as before, what benefit is there in being converted? And what becomes of all thoſe ſcriptures, which declare, "He ſhall "ſave his people from their ſins (*q*). That "we might ſerve him, without fear, in "holineſs and righteouſneſs all the days of "our lives (*r*). A new heart will I give "you, and a new Spirit will I put within "you, and I will take away the ſtony heart "out of your fleſh, and I will give you "an heart of fleſh: and I will put my "Spirit within you, and cauſe you to walk "in my ſtatutes, and ye ſhall keep my "judgments, and do them (*s*). Who gave "himſelf for us, that he might redeem us "from all iniquity, and purify unto him-"ſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good "works (*t*)." And pray take notice, my dear THERON, that as God gave the Law, written on tables of ſtone to *Iſrael*, to all *Iſrael* "according the fleſh," which covenant (*u*), they did break (*x*), ſo he has expreſly promiſed to all the ſpiritual *Iſrael*, *i.e.* to all true believers (*y*), that he will "write "his Law in their hearts;" that is, give them an inward temper of mind anſwerable

(*q*) Matt. i. 21. (*r*) Luke i. 43.
(*s*) Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. (*t*) Tit. ii. 14.
(*u*) Deut. ix. 9—15. (*x*) Heb. viii. 9.
(*y*) Gal. iii. 29.

to his written Law (z). A hypocrite may go to God and ſay, 'Pardon is mine; Grace 'is mine;' and be raviſhed with his own deluſion: but God doth, in fact, write his Law in the heart of every true believer. This is God's mark, put upon all that are of his flock; whereby his ſheep are diſtinguiſhed from the reſt of the world.

THER. But cannot a man, who is very uncertain of his ſanctification, be ſure of eternal life ſome other way?

PAUL. Our bleſſed Saviour having deſcribed the chriſtian temper and life in his ſermon on the mount, concludes with the ſtrongeſt Aſſurances, that ſuch, and ſuch only, as are truly ſanctified, ſhall be finally ſaved. If we are ſuch, our "houſe is "built upon a rock;" if not, our "houſe "is built upon the ſand." Now, my dear THERON, we hope to go to heaven when we die: ſo do many, who will be finally diſappointed. How ſhall you and I know, that our foundation is good? who can tell us? Surely none better than he who is to be our Judge. Could we aſk our bleſſed Saviour, Lord, how ſhall we know? What would he ſay? Thanks be to God, we know what he would ſay, as ſurely as though he ſhould anſwer us with an audible voice from heaven. For he is now of the ſame mind, as when he dwelt on earth. What he then taught, is

(z) Heb. viii. 10.

left on record, plain for all to read, that none might miſtake in a point of ſuch infinite importance.

Take your Bible, my THERON, read our Saviour's ſermon on the mount; and there you will ſee the character of a true chriſtian, drawn by an infallible hand; and find a teſt, by which you may ſafely try your ſtate. The true chriſtian is humble, penitent, meek, longing after holineſs, merciful, pure in heart, a peace-maker, willing to part with all for Chriſt, and to go through the greateſt ſufferings in his cauſe(*a*). Like ſalt, he is full of life and ſpirit: like light, by his knowledge and example he enlightens all around him, and is an honour to his Maſter (*b*),—lives by a ſtricter rule than any hypocrite (*c*),—does not juſtify nor indulge the leaſt grudge againſt his neighbour, or the firſt ſtirrings of any corruption in his heart (*d*), —loves not only his friends, but his enemies, even his worſt enemies (*e*),—gives alms and prays, as in the ſight of God (*f*),—is chiefly concerned for the honour of God, and kingdom and intereſt of Chriſt in the world (*g*),—chuſes God for his portion, lays up his treaſure in heaven, and means with an honeſt heart, with a ſingle eye, only to be God's ſervant; and truſting his kind providence for temporal ſupplies, he makes it his chief

(*a*) Matt. v. 1—12. (*b*) Ver. 13—16.
(*c*) Ver. 20. (*d*) Ver. 21—42. (*e*) Ver. 43—48.
(*f*) Chap. vi. 1—5. (*g*) Ver. 9, 10.

buſineſs to be truly religious (*b*).—Not of a carping, captious, cenſorious diſpoſition; but chiefly attentive to, and moſtly concerned to amend, his own faults (*i*):—he prays, and his prayers are anſwered (*k*),—and in imitation of the divine goodneſs, he is kind to all around him, doing as he would be done by (*l*): At his converſion, he enters in at this ſtrait gate of ſtrict piety, and through the courſe of his life he travels in this narrow way of holineſs almoſt alone, few ſuited with that road, many walking in broader ways (*m*),—nor will he be diverted from theſe ſentiments and ways, by any preachers or writers, whatever appearances of holineſs and devotion they may put on (*n*).

THER. But do you really and verily believe, that none will at laſt be admitted into heaven, but thoſe who are of this character?

PAUL. Pray, my dear THERON, read our Saviour's anſwer to your queſtion, and believe it. Believe that he means as he ſays.

THER. "Not every one that ſaith unto "me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the "kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the "will of my Father which is in heaven (*o*)."

PAUL. Obſerve,—that DOTH—not that did ſome years ago—but that doth, through the courſe of his life. Forgive this interruption;—pray read on.

(*b*) Matt. vi. 19—34. (*i*) Chap. vii. 1—5.
(*k*) Ver. 7—11. (*l*) Ver. 12. (*m*) Ver. 13, 14.
(*n*) Ver. 15. (*o*) Ver. 21.

THER. "Many will ſay to me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not propheſied in "thy name? and in thy name caſt out "devils? and in thy name done many won-"derful works (*p*)?"

PAUL. You ſee they are in confident expectation of eternal life. But what is their doom?

THER. "And then will I profeſs unto "them, I never knew you: depart from "me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore, "whoſoever heareth theſe ſayings of mine, "and doth them, I will liken him unto a "wiſe man, which built his houſe upon a "rock: and the rain deſcended, and the "floods came, and the winds blew, and "beat upon that houſe: and it fell not, "for it was founded upon a rock. And "every one that heareth theſe ſayings of "mine, and doth them not, ſhall be likened "unto a fooliſh man, which built his houſe "upon the ſand: and the rains deſcended, "and the floods came, and the winds blew, "and beat upon that houſe: and it fell, "and great was the fall of it (*q*)."

PAUL. Obſerve, my dear THERON, our Saviour does not ſay, 'Every one who 'firmly believeth that he ſhall be ſaved, 'however unconſcious of ſanctifying ope-'rations in his own breaſt ſhall, as ſure as 'God is true, be for ever happy.' No—but juſt the reverſe. He ſays, that how-

(*p*) Matt. vii. 22. (*q*) Ver. 23—27.

ever confident men be of ſalvation, yet if they do not the things contained in his ſermon, their hopes ſhall infallibly be diſappointed. Now ſay, my dear THERON, do you believe this doctrine taught by our bleſſed Saviour?

THER. I muſt own, I have not been wont to view things juſt in this light. 'I 'uſed to think, I need not trouble myſelf 'to find out a multitude of marks and 'ſigns of true grace, if I could find a 'few good ones. Particularly, I thought "I might know I was paſſed from death "to life, if I loved the brethren (*r*)."

PAUL. Your few good ones are all counterfeit if alone, ſeparate from other good ones. For the true ſaint receives every grace from Chriſt (*s*). Nor did Chriſt mean to ſingle out a few in his ſermon, but to give a brief ſummary of the whole chriſtian life. And "he that heareth theſe "ſayings of mine, and doth them,"—not doth a FEW of them—but "doth "them," one and all. Read thro' the firſt Epiſtle of *John*, and you will ſee this ſentiment confirmed: where there is one grace, there is all. If there is not all, there is none (*t*).

(*r*) Mr MARSHAL *on Sanctification*, pag. 291, 292.

(*s*) John i. 16.

(*t*) However on the Arminian and Antinomian ſchemes of Religion, in which nothing is truly harmonious

THER. But, Sir, ſuffer me to tell you, that 'this method of ſeeking Peace and Aſ-
'ſurance, I fear, will perplex the ſimple-
'minded; and cheriſh, rather than ſup-
'preſs, the fluctuations of doubt. For,
'let the ſigns be what you pleaſe, a love
'of the brethren, or a love of all righte-
'ouſneſs, a change of heart, or an altera-
'tion of life; theſe good qualifications are
'ſometimes, like the ſtars at noon-day, not
'eaſily, if at all, diſcernable; or elſe they
'are like a glow-worm in the night, glim-
'mering, rather than ſhining: Conſe-
'quently will yield, at the beſt, but a
'feeble,—at the worſt, a very precarious
'evidence. If in ſuch a manner, we ſhould
'acquire ſome little Aſſurance, how ſoon
'may it be unſettled by the incurſions of
'daily temptations, or deſtroyed by the
'inſurrection of remaining ſin! At ſuch a
'juncture, how will it keep its ſtanding!
'How retain its being! It will fare like
'a tottering wall, before a tempeſt; or be

nious and conſiſtent, what they call graces, may in ſome particulars of them be found alone; yet on St *Paul*'s ſcheme this can never happen. For every grace natively reſults from thoſe divine views, which lay the foundation of any one grace. "Beholding, as in a "glaſs, the glory of the Lord," as ſhining forth in the Law and in the Goſpel, "we are changed into the "ſame image;"—that is, into a real conformity to the Law, and a genuine compliance with the Goſpel, compriſing all the branches of Religion. *See* Mr EDWARDS on *Religious Affections*, Pag. 249, 261.

" as the ruſh without the mire, and the flag
" without water (*u*)."

'Inſtead therefore of poring on our 'own hearts, to diſcover by inherent 'qualities our intereſt in Chriſt, I ſhould 'rather renew my Application to the free 'and faithful promiſe of the Lord: aſſert 'and maintain my title on this unalterable 'ground. Pardon is mine, I would ſay; 'Grace is mine, Chriſt and all his ſpiri-'tual Bleſſings are mine. Why? Becauſe 'I am conſcious of ſanctifying operations 'in my own breaſt? Rather, becauſe God 'hath ſpoken in his holineſs; becauſe all 'theſe precious privileges are conſigned 'over to me in the everlaſting Goſpel, with 'a clearneſs unqueſtionable as the truth, 'with a certainty inviolable as the oath of 'God (*x*)."

PAUL. But did you not uſe to think, that Faith was productive of good works? Yea, did not your ASPASIO teach you this doctrine?

PAUL. I muſt confeſs he did. This was once the language of my ASPASIO to me, while I was yet an unbeliever. To give me an exalted idea of Faith, thus he taught me. 'Faith will make every power of our 'ſouls ſpring forward, to glorify our hea-'venly Father,—glorify him by every in-

(*u*) Job viii. 11.
(*x*) HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 361, 362.

'ſtance of obedience, fidelity and zeal (*y*).' 'It makes all the powers of our ſouls like 'the chariots of *Amminadab*, ready, expe-'dite, and active in duty (*z*).' 'This is 'the love of God, that we walk after his 'commandments.' This is the natural 'fruit, this the certain evidence of love 'to that glorious, tranſcendent, and adora-'ble Being.' 'It buildeth up the fair fa-'bric of univerſal Godlineſs (*a*).' It 'will 'diffuſe itſelf through every intellectual fa-'culty, and extend to every ſpecies of duty, 'till the whole heart is filled with the image, 'and the whole behaviour regulated by the 'Law of the bleſſed God (*b*). It 'will 'induce us to preſent all the members of 'our bodies, and all the faculties of our 'ſouls, as a living ſacrifice to the honour 'of God, to be employed in his ſervice and 'reſigned to his will;'—to 'be as pilgrims 'below, and have our converſation above.' 'Such, my dear THERON,' ſaid he to me, 'will be the effects of Faith (*c*).' 'Nothing 'is more certain, than that Faith is a vital, 'an operative, a victorious principle (*d*).' —'When the firſt converts believed, the 'change of their behaviour was ſo remark-'able, the holineſs of their lives ſo exem-'plary, that they won the favour, and com-

(*y*) Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 169.
(*z*) *Dialogues*, p. 176. (*a*) Ibid. p. 177.
(*b*) Ibid. p. 179. (*c*) Ibid. p. 181. (*d*) Ib. 182.

'manded the reſpect of all the people (*e*).' 'In ſhort, it is as impoſſible for the ſun to be 'in his meridian ſphere, and not to diſſi-'pate darkneſs, or diffuſe light, as for Faith 'to exiſt in the ſoul and not exalt the tem-'per and meliorate the conduct (*f*).' All which, beſides proving it by many texts of ſcripture, he illuſtrated at large, in the example of St *Paul* and *Abraham* (*g*), and concluded with aſſuring me, that Faith 'will 'give life to every religious duty (*h*);' and make us 'abound in the work of the Lord (*i*).' —Yea, at another time he taught me, 'that 'Faith, even when weak, is productive of 'good works (*k*).' Which are 'the proof,' and do 'undeniably atteſt its ſincerity (*l*).' They are 'the grand characteriſtic, which 'diſtinguiſhes the ſterling from the coun-'terfeit (*m*).' 'They will diſtinguiſh the 'true believer from the hypocritical pro-'feſſor, even at the great tribunal (*n*).' And at another time I remember my ASPASIO ſaid, 'Do we' "love our enemies; bleſs "them that curſe us; do good to them "that hate us; pray for them which de-"ſpitefully uſe us, and perſecute us?" 'Without this loving and lovely diſpoſition,

(*e*) Acts ii. 47.
(*f*) HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 182, 183.
(*g*) *Dialogue*, p. 187—203. (*h*) Ibid. p. 206.
(*i*) Ibid. p. 207. (*k*) Vol. I. Edit. I. p. 251.
(*l*) Vol. I. Edit. 1. p. 252.
(*m*) Vol. I. Edit. 1. p. 259.
(*n*) Vol. I. Edit. 1. p 278.

'*we abide*, ſays the Apoſtle, *in death*; are deſtitute of ſpiritual, and have no title to 'eternal life (*m*).'

PAUL. 'No title to eternal life!' How dare you go to God, and ſay, 'Pardon is 'mine; Grace is mine; Chriſt and all his 'ſpiritual Bleſſings are mine?'

THER. This is that very Faith, which my ASPASIO taught me to exerciſe. And which he aſſured me, would be 'as a torch 'in a ſheaf (*n*), inkindling every grace 'into a ſudden flame.'

PAUL. But why then does not every grace flame out? Why is not your heart like the chariots of *Amminadab*? And your title to heaven clear 'from a conſciouſneſs of ſanc-'tifying operations in your own breaſt?' If your Faith is 'a vital, an operative, a 'victorious principle,' why cannot you obtain a full Aſſurance from that 'grand 'characteriſtic, which diſtinguiſhes the 'ſterling from the counterfeit,' in this world; and which 'will diſtinguiſh the true 'believer from the hypocritical profeſſor, 'even at the great tribunal;" and without which, you are in fact 'deſtitute of ſpiritual, 'and have no title to eternal life?'

THER. Once I had this evidence, as I thought, clear in my favour. But by experience I found at length, that no ſteady laſting Aſſurance could be had this way. For

(*m*) Vol. II. Edit. 2. p. 303.
(*n*) Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 336.

my graces were moſtly, 'as the ſtars at noon,' quite inviſible. or at beſt, 'as a glow-worm 'in the night,' but juſt to be ſeen. So that the 'little Aſſurance' I had, was very unſteady. Yea, looking for marks of grace, I found, 'rather increaſed my doubts;' as I could not but diſcern more evidences againſt me, than for me. Therefore I gave up this way, as tending to perpetual uncertainty. And as a more direct way to Aſſurance and Peace, I learned to live by Faith; to go to God, and ſay, 'Pardon is mine, &c.'

PAUL. And all, my dear THERON— 'without any evidence from ſcripture, ſenſe, 'or reaſon.' Yea, in direct oppoſition to your own ASPASIO, who affirms, that Faith is 'a vital, operative, victorious principle.' Pray, how do you know that your Faith is ſterling, and not counterfeit! Be quite impartial, and ſay, is it not to be feared, that your Faith is what St *James* calls a dead Faith?

THER. But the time once was, when I was full of light, love and joy.

PAUL. Yes—Like a "torch in a ſheaf," all in a flame of love, to think your ſins were pardoned. But you ſee, that this ſort of love, like the *Iſraelites* joy at the ſide of the red-ſea, does not laſt long. But like the ſtony-ground, "it endures for "a while, and then comes to nothing." And your graces are now no more to be ſeen than 'the ſtars at noon.' And you muſt

give up your Aſſurance, or take another courſe to ſupport it. And another courſe indeed you take,—to live by Faith!—'Without any evidence,' as Mr MARSHAL owns, whoſe book your ASPASIO values next to the Bible,—without any evidence 'from 'ſcripture, ſenſe, or reaſon.' And is this that glorious Faith, your ASPASIO once ſo highly extolled! Is all come to this at laſt!

THER. Yes: And did not *Abraham* thus live by Faith? who "againſt hope believed "in hope (*o*)." And was not this the way of ſaints in general under the Old Teſtament? When "they walked in darkneſs "and ſaw no light, they truſted in the "Lord, and ſtayed themſelves on their "God (*p*)." And was not this the way of ſaints in the apoſtolic age? "They walked "by Faith, and not by ſight (*q*)." *David* checked himſelf for doubting; "Why "art thou caſt down, O my ſoul (*r*)?" And *Aſaph* looked upon it as his ſin. "I ſaid, "This is my infirmity (*s*)." And Chriſt often upbraided his diſciples for their unbelief. And St *Paul* charges the *Hebrew* converts not to "caſt away their confidence (*t*)."

PAUL. Pray, my dear THERON, take your Bible, and read the ſeveral texts you refer to; read what goes before, and what follows after; and you may eaſily ſee, not

(*o*) Rom. iv. 18. (*p*) Iſa. l. 10.
(*q*) 2 Cor. v. 7. (*r*) Pſal. xlii.
(*s*) Pſal. lxxvii. 10. (*t*) Heb. x. 25.

one of them is to your purpoſe. God had promiſed to give *Abraham* a ſon, although his wife was not only barren, but alſo by reaſon of age paſt child-bearing: And notwithſtanding the difficulties in the way of its accompliſhment, *Abraham* believed the divine promiſe. God had by the mouth of *Samuel* promiſed to give *David* the kingdom of *Iſrael*. But he was baniſhed from his country, and from God's ſanctuary: his enemies taunted; yea, and his life was in continual danger. So that he was ready ſometimes to ſay, "I ſhall periſh one day "by the hand of Saul." But then again he checked himſelf for giving way to ſuch unreaſonable diſcouragement; after the expreſs promiſe of God to him. "Why art "thou caſt down, O my ſoul!" However, through all the Pſalm he appears conſcious to the exerciſe of grace in his heart, and diſcovers not the leaſt doubt of the goodneſs of his ſtate (*u*). So the captives in *Babylon* had an expreſs promiſe, that after ſeventy years they ſhould return to *Zion*. But ſuch an event, ſituate as they were, ſeemed incredible. Every thing looked dark. They had no light. They ſaw no way for their return. But God had promiſed it; and therefore, they "(who feared the Lord, and "obeyed his voice," that is, who were 'conſcious of ſanctifying operations in their

(*u*) See Pſal. xlii.

own breaſts)' for their encouragement, are exhorted to caſt their burden upon their God, and put an implicit Faith in his wiſdom, power and veracity; and truſt in him to accompliſh his word (*x*). So *Aſaph* knew he was a ſincere godly man; as is evident from the ſeventy-third *Pſalm*, throughout. But he was ſo overwhelmed with a view of the calamitous ſtate of God's church and people (See *Pſal.* lxxii. 20. and read the eleven *Pſalms* following, intitled *Pſalms of Aſaph*) that ſometimes (like thoſe in *Iſa.* xlix. 14.) he was ready to ſink under diſcouragement, as though God had quite caſt off his church and people for ever. For which he checketh himſelf, and endeavours to raiſe his hopes, from a remembrance of God's wonderful works to *Iſrael* of old, in bringing them out of *Egypt* (*y*). So the chriſtian *Hebrews* knew the ſincerity of their hearts, and the goodneſs of their ſtate, by the fruits of holineſs (*z*). And the confidence that St *Paul* exhorts them to hold faſt, was their confidence of the truth of chriſtianity; for the profeſſion of which, they had already ſuffered much, and were likely to ſuffer more: And yet if they drew back, and renounced chriſtianity, it would coſt them their ſouls (*a*). And though it is

(*x*) Read from Iſai. xlix. 13. to Iſa. l. 10.)
(*y*) Pſal. lxxvii. (*z*) Heb. vi. 9, 10, 11.
(*a*) Heb. x. 23—39.

is true, our Saviour upbraided his diſciples for not believing he was riſen from the dead, of which they had ſufficient evidence, &c. yet neither they, nor any other perſon, from the beginning of *Geneſis*, to the end of the *Revelation*, were ever blamed for doubting their title to eternal life, while their evidences were not clear.

Yea, our Saviour was ſo far from encouraging his followers to this blind Faith, this bold preſumption, that his whole ſermon on the mount is directly levelled againſt it. None are pronounced bleſſed, but thoſe who are endowed with holy and divine qualifications of heart, and lead anſwerable lives. And though men were endowed with the miraculous gifts of the holy Spirit, and "propheſied in Chriſt's "name, and in his name caſt out devils, "and did many wonderful works," and made a great profeſſion, and had high confidence, crying, *Lord, Lord*; as our Saviour foreſaw many would: Yet if they were not under the real government of that divine temper, deſcribed in that ſermon throughout, our Saviour affirms, that at the day of judgment he would bid them *depart* (*b*). To go on, therefore, after all this—confident we ſhall have eternal life, though unconſcious of ſanctifying operations in our own breaſts,—is, forgive me, THERON,—is, I ſay, little better than down-

(*b*) Matt. vii. 21—27.

right Infidelity. Yea, did we believe our Saviour to be an impoſtor, we might with leſs difficulty expect to get to heaven in ſuch a way. For as ſure as he was a meſſenger ſent from God, ſo ſure ſhall we find the doctrine contained in his ſermon on the mount verified at that great day, when he ſhall come to judge the world. Wherefore, "be not deceived," O my THERON, "God will not be mocked. For whatſoever "a man ſoweth, that ſhall he alſo reap (*c*)."

To refer to thoſe words of St *Paul*, "We "walk by Faith, and not by ſight (*d*)," as you do, and to imagine that St *Paul* and the primitive chriſtians lived at ſuch a low, blind, preſumptuous rate, caſts infinite reproach upon Chriſtianity. For they all, with unvailed faces, "beheld, as in a glaſs, the "glory of the Lord, and were changed "into the ſame image from glory to glory, "even as by the Spirit of the Lord (*e*)." —And divine and eternal things all lay open, as it were to the Apoſtle's view. He looked at them; he ſaw them; he believed them: A ſenſe of their infinite importance penetrated his heart. He was clean carried above all the goods and ills of this preſent world—and, like the ſun in the firmament, he kept on a ſteady courſe, till he had finiſhed his race, and obtained a crown of righteouſneſs. And thus HE "lived by

(*c*) Gal. vi. 7. (*d*) 2 Cor. v. 7.
(*e*) 2 Cor. iii. 18.

" Faith (*f*)." Yea, it was an avowed principle, in the apoſtolic age, to judge of the goodneſs of their ſtate, by the holineſs of their hearts and lives. " Whoſoever " abideth in him, ſinneth not: Whoſoever " ſinneth, hath not ſeen him, neither known " him (*g*). Let no man deceive you (*h*). " He that committeth ſin is of the devil (*i*). " Whoſoever is born of God, doth not " commit ſin (*k*). In this the children of " God are manifeſt, and the children of " the devil." This was the apoſtolic criterion: and therefore, if any pretended to converſion, if any pretended to be acquainted with Chriſt, who lived not according to our Saviour's inſtructions, particularly in his ſermon on the mount, this was his doom; he was branded for a liar. " He that ſaith, " I know him, and keepeth not his com- " mandments, is a liar, and the truth is " not in him (*l*)."

THER. I grant, the ſaints in ſcripture uſually ſpeak the language of Aſſurance; but I always thought, 'we had no cauſe to 'judge, that this Aſſurance was grounded 'on the certainty of their own good quali- 'fications (*m*).'

PAUL. Was not *Abraham* certain of his ſincerity, when out of love and obedience to

(*f*) 2 Cor. iv 16—18. and 2 Tim. iv. 6—8.
(*g*) 1 John iii. 6, 7. (*h*) Ver. 8. (*i*) Ver. 9.
(*k*) Ver. 10. (*l*) 1 John ii. 4.
(*m*) MARSHAL *on Sanctification*, p. 184.

God he left his father's houſe and native country; and at one word ſpeaking, felt a heart prepared to offer up his beloved *Iſaac*? Was not *Moſes* certain of his ſincerity, when out of love to the cauſe of God he deſpiſed all the treaſures of *Egypt*; and afterwards felt he had rather die, had rather have his name blotted out of the book of the living, than that God ſhould not effectually take care of the honour of his own great name? Was not *Job* certain of his ſincerity, when with ſuch calmneſs he ſaid, "The "Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken "away; and bleſſed be the name of the "Lord?" Yea, did not he conſtantly aſſert his ſincerity, through all his trials? "O "how love I thy law (*n*)! It is my meditation all the day, ſays *David* (*o*)." Whom "have I in heaven but thee? And there "is none upon earth I deſire beſides thee, "ſays *Aſaph* (*p*). I have walked before "thee in truth, and with a perfect heart (*q*)," ſays *Hezekiah*, looking death in the face.— "Thou knoweſt that I love thee, ſays *Peter* "(*r*). Our rejoicing is this, the teſtimony "of our conſcience, that in ſimplicity and "godly ſincerity, we have had our converſation in the world (*s*)," ſays *Paul*. But why do I mention particulars? For this, even this, is the way in which all

(*n*) Job xxxi. 1—40.
(*o*) Pſal. cxix. 97.
(*p*) Pſal. lxxiii. 25.
(*q*) Iſa. xxxviii. 3.
(*r*) John xxi. 17.
(*s*) 2 Cor. i. 12.

ſcriptural ſaints attained Aſſurance. "Hereby "we know that we know him, if we keep "his commandments." And had you lived in the apoſtolic age, O my THERON, I doubt not, all good people would have been ready, on hearing ſuch talk as you have been too much carried away with, to cry out,—"But know, thou vain man, that "Faith without works is dead (*u*)."

THER. 'If in ſuch a manner we ſhould 'acquire ſome little Aſſurance, how ſoon 'may it be unſettled by the incurſions of 'temptation, or deſtroyed by the inſurrec-'tion of remaining ſin! At ſuch a juncture, 'how will it keep its ſtanding! how retain 'its being! It will fare like a tottering wall 'before the tempeſt; or be "as the ruſh "without mire, and the flag without "water (*x*)."

PAUL. It is true, when the ſtorm ariſes, "the houſe that is built upon the ſand," will be 'like a tottering wall before the tempeſt.' And "as the ruſh without mire, and the "flag without water, ſo the hypocrite's hope "ſhall periſh (*y*)." But in true ſaints, their Faith is 'a victorious principle.' "For "whatſoever is born of God, overcometh "the world: And this is the victory that "overcometh the world, even our Faith (*z*)." Nor ſhall any ever be admitted to "eat of

(*u*) Jam. ii. 20. (*x*) Job viii. 11. *Dialogues*, p. 362.
(*y*) Job viii. 11—13. (*z*) 1 John v. 3.

"the tree of life, which is in the midſt of "the paradiſe of God, but he that over-"cometh." This is the meſſage which Chriſt, ſince his exaltation in heaven, has ſent to his church on earth (*a*). And therefore, "Bleſſed are they that do his command-"ments, that they may have right to the "tree of life, and may enter in through the "gates into the city (*b*)."

THER. But are there not ſome who are but babes in Chriſt?

PAUL. Yes.—And "as new-born babes "they deſire the ſincere milk of the word, "that they may GROW thereby (*c*);" and as they grow up "unto a perfect man (*d*)," their Aſſurance increaſes in exact proportion (*e*).

THER. This doctrine of yours, 'I fear,' will wound weak chriſtians, and 'perplex 'the ſimple-minded (*f*).'

PAUL. This doctrine, ſo plainly taught by JESUS CHRIST and by ALL HIS APOSTLES, were it once thoroughly underſtood and firmly believed, would not only 'wound' and 'perplex' preſumptuous hypocrites; but even ſlay its thouſands, yea, its ten thouſands: while the righteous would flouriſh like the green bay-tree, nouriſhed up by ſuch ſound and good doctrine. For never

(*a*) Rev. ii. 7, 11, 17, 26. and iii. 5, 12, 21. and xxi. 7.
(*b*) Rev. xxii. 14. (*c*) 1 Pet. ii. 2.
(*d*) Eph. iv. 13. (*e*) 2 Pet. i. 5—10.
(*f*) Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 361.

did Assurance, true and genuine Assurance, so abound among professors, as in the apostolic age, when this was the doctrine universally in vogue. And then the holy lives of their converts were so 'exemplary, 'that they won the favour and commanded 'the respect of all the people.' And christianity, thus adorned by the constant behaviour of its professors, gained ground every where, in spite of all the efforts of earth and hell. Whereas, in the days of *Luther*, in the days of *Cromwell*, and in our day, when your kind of Assurance has been so much in vogue, the lives of many professors have been such as to bring reproach upon christianity in the sight of the world. It was this that prejudiced the Papists against the Reformation in *Luther*'s time. It was this, that prejudiced *England* against experimental Religion in *Cromwell*'s time. And it is this, it is this, O my THERON, that has brought vital piety into such general contempt in *New England*, in these late years. Our opposers cry, 'Let us wait, and see how these 'converts will turn out a few years hence.' They waited—and are confirmed in their Infidelity: And thousands seem to be gone off to the Arminian scheme, or worse.—Could I speak, O my THERON, with a voice like that of the arch-angel, when he shall wake up all the sleeping dead, I would sound an alarm to all God's people through

the chriſtian world, warn them againſt this deluſion, and invite them to return back to the old apoſtolic doctrine.

THER. But, dear Sir, it is not poſſible for me to maintain Aſſurance in this way. To ſuppoſe that my inherent graces, which are ſo difficult to be diſcerned, at beſt, and ſo unſteady and precarious, are a proper foundation on which to build a fixed Aſſurance, is a doctrine quite romantic.—Yea, you may as well 'place the dome 'of a cathedral on the ſtalk of a tulip (*g*).' But on the other hand, by the witneſs of the Spirit, in contradiſtinction from inherent graces, a firm and unſhaken Aſſurance of our eternal ſalvation may be obtained (*h*).

PAUL. A firm and ſolid ROCK is this foundation; as he declares, who is the Son of God, and our final Judge. No, ſay you, it is rather like 'the ſtalk of a tulip!' On what evidence then will you venture your immortal ſoul, for a whole eternity? On the witneſs of the Spirit? But, O my dear THERON, what good will this witneſs of the Spirit do you, when you come to die? When the ſtorm ariſes, when the rain deſcends, the flood comes, and the wind beats upon your houſe, it will fall; 'like 'a tottering wall before the tempeſt,' if not founded on that very rock, pointed out by our bleſſed Saviour. Ten thouſand

(*g*) Mr. HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 361.
(*h*) MARSHAL *on Sanctification*, p. 184—188.

witneſſes, from ten thouſand ſpirits, will ſtand you in no ſtead. For as true as that Jeſus was the Meſſiah, the man that "hear-"eth his ſayings and doth them not," ſhall at laſt hear that dreadful word, "Depart, "depart; I know ye not—I know ye not, "ye workers of iniquity." Then you will find, that "without holineſs no man ſhall "ſee the Lord (*i*)." And then you will ſee that ſaying, now to you ſo incredible, made the teſt of admiſſion into heaven—"No man can be Chriſt's diſciple, unleſs he "love him more than father and mother, "wife and children, houſes and lands, yea, "more than his own life (*k*)." You may come to the door, and knock, and cry, "Lord, Lord, open to me;" and tell him, you firmly believed in your heart you ſhould have eternal life: But if you are found a worker of iniquity, he will bid you depart. You may cry for mercy; but your cries will be for ever in vain. That ſpirit, O my THERON, which would make you believe your ſtate to be good, when according to ſcripture it is bad, is not the holy Spirit, by which the ſcriptures were inſpired; nor is its teſtimony to be credited.

THER. 'But if I muſt try the witneſs of 'the Spirit by the ſincerity of my graces,

(*i*) Heb. xii. 14. (*k*) Matt. x. 37, 38. Luke xiv. 25—33.

'the teſtimony of the Spirit will ſtand me in 'no ſtead (*l*).'

PAUL. If you truſt to the teſtimony of the Spirit, without any regard to the ſincerity of your graces, you have nothing but a ſpirit, a naked ſpirit, to depend upon. And if your ſpirit ſhould prove to be Satan, "transformed into an angel of light," you are deluded—your ſoul is loſt—for ever loſt.

THER. But if we muſt firſt know by our inherent graces, that we are the children of God, this would render the witneſs of the Spirit needleſs.

PAUL. Unleſs we firſt know that we have theſe inherent graces, we can never be aſſured of our good eſtate, according to our Saviour's ſermon on the mount. Pray, mind this, my dear THERON.

THER. Then you deny the immediate witneſs of the Spirit, I ſuppoſe.

PAUL. This immediate witneſs of the Spirit, which you plead for, is certainly contrary to ſcripture. For, it will tell a man, his ſtate is good, when according to God's word it is bad. And, which is directly to the caſe in hand, it leads men to build their Aſſurance, not on that rock our Saviour points out as the only ſafe foundation, but on ſomething entirely different: And, I am ſorry to ſay it, tempts men to compare, what our Saviour calls a rock, to

(*l*) MARSHAL *on Sanctification*, p. 188.

the ſtalk of a tulip. This ſpirit, therefore, being contrary to ſcripture, is not the Spirit of God, but the ſpirit of deluſion.

THER. What, then, can the witneſs of the Spirit be?

PAUL. The deſign of a witneſs is, to prove a point, to make it evident and certain; that we may believe it without the leaſt doubt. And the proof muſt be legal proof, or it will not paſs in law. Now, the point to be proved is,—that 'I am a 'child of God, a true diſciple of Chriſt;' and ſo intitled to eternal life. For, none but the children of God, and true diſciples of Chriſt, are intitled to heaven, according to the word of God: Which is the only rule whereby all are finally to be judged. But Chriſt affirms, that "no man can be "his diſciple, unleſs he love him more "than father or mother, wife or children, "houſes or lands, yea, more than his own "life:" And aſſures us in the moſt plain and expreſs manner, that all who expect to go to heaven, not having ſuch hearts and lives as he deſcribes in his ſermon, ſhall certainly be diſappointed. If, therefore, the Spirit of God means to make it evident to me, that I am a child of God, a diſciple of Chriſt, and ſo an heir of heaven, it will be, it muſt be, by a proof that will ſtand in law, a proof the Bible allows to be good. Otherwiſe no credit is to

be given to it: unleſs we will ſet aſide this infallible Law-book, by which all the chriſtian world is to be judged. If the proof will not paſs with our final Judge, it ought not to paſs with us now. But no proof will paſs with our final Judge, but what quadrates with the forementioned declarations of our Saviour. For he will not recede from his own words. Therefore, there is but this one way to prove to my conſcience that I am a child of God, a diſciple of Chriſt, and ſo an heir of glory; there is but one thing, that can poſſibly convince me; namely, for the Spirit of God to give me ſuch an heart as the children of God and true diſciples of Chriſt have, according to the plain declarations of the Goſpel. By this, I may know; and by nothing ſhort of this. If this evidence is doubtful, no other can, no other ſhould, ſatisfy me. If this is plain, no other is neceſſary in order to a full Aſſurance. Therefore, then the "Spi-"rit of God witneſſes with my ſpirit that "I am a child of God," when by a large communication of divine grace, this is made plain beyond all doubt. I feel the heart of a child towards God; a heart full of love, reverence, truſt, obedience; a heart to go to him as a child to a father; or in other words, "the Spirit of adoption, whereby "I cry, Abba, Father." And by this I "know I am a child of God; and "if a

"child, then an heir, an heir of God, and "a joint-heir with Jeſus Chriſt (*m*)." All true believers had this ſeal of the Spirit in the apoſtolic age (*n*). And for ought that you or I know, all true believers have had it in all ſucceeding ages ever ſince. It is certain, they have in ſome degree. And it is certain, no full Aſſurance can be had, that is genuine and good, unleſs they have it in ſuch a degree as to be plain beyond all diſpute.

THER. I uſed to think, the Spirit helped us immediately, not by the evidence of internal graces, but immediately, without any medium, without any evidence, to ſee our intereſt in the love of God, as held forth in the abſolute unconditional grant of the Goſpel. So that one might ſay, 'Pardon is 'mine; Grace is mine; Chriſt and all 'his ſpiritual Bleſſings are mine;' not be-'cauſe I am conſcious of ſanctifying ope-'rations in my own breaſt, but becauſe 'all theſe bleſſings are abſolutely made 'over to me in the everlaſting Goſpel.' This deed of conveyance, thus ſeen by the help of the Spirit, was the grand demonſtration of my right to pardon and ſalvation. And now "believing the love that God hath "unto us, we love him, becauſe he firſt "loved us;" And ſo our love to God, and

(*m*) Rom. viii. 16, 17. compared with ver. i. 5, 6, 9, 12, 13, 14. (*n*) Eph. i. 13.

other graces, are a kind of ſecondary evidence; without any regard to which, we may, yea, previous to which, we muſt have Aſſurance by the direct act of Faith. For it is this Aſſurance, this Aſſurance alone, which inkindles our love and all our graces (*o*).

PAUL. But it has been already proved, that theſe bleſſings are not made over to us, as ſinners, abſolutely and unconditionally; but only to thoſe who are in Chriſt by a true and living Faith. Yours, my dear THERON, forgive me this freedom,—yours is a falſe Goſpel—a falſe Spirit—a falſe Faith—a falſe Love. All is falſe. Built, at bottom, on no evidence 'from ſcripture, ſenſe, or reaſon.'

THER. But amidſt all this error and deluſion, how ſhall we know the truth!

PAUL. By making the written word our rule, our only rule. Once the queſtion was, concerning Jeſus of *Nazareth*, "Art "thou He that ſhould come; or, look we "for another? Go and ſhew John, ſaid our "bleſſed Saviour, thoſe things which ye do "hear and ſee. The blind receive their "ſight, and the lame walk, and the lepers "are cleanſed, the deaf hear, the dead "are raiſed, and the poor have the Goſpel "preached unto them (*p*)." Theſe were the characters of the Meſſiah, according to

(*o*) Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, p. 358, 359, 360, 361, 362. MARSHAL *on Sanctification*, p. 184—188.

(*p*) Matt. xi. 3, 4, 5.

the ſacred writings of the Old Teſtament; and to theſe he appeals. Now the queſtion is concerning TRERON, Is he a true believer, a real convert, a chriſtian, that our Lord will own at the day of judgment? Well: Go read, ſay I, our Saviour's ſermon on the mount. "Bleſſed are the poor in Spirit, "—Bleſſed are they that mourn,—the "meek, &c. &c." to the end. And ſee; is my THERON a man of this character? If ſo, his "houſe is built upon a rock." If not, it is "built upon the ſand." If the holy Spirit has wrought ſo great a miracle as to make you ſuch a man, this is what the devil cannot do. This is ſuch a witneſs of the Spirit as will paſs at the great tribunal: and you will need no other. But without this, ten thouſand revelations will avail you nothing; nay, but that will be your certain doom, "I know you not, depart from me, "ye workers of iniquity."

Had one appeared, and claimed to be the Meſſiah, without performing thoſe mighty works our Saviour did; would any have been obliged to give credit to his teſtimony? No ſurely. And does a ſpirit come, and teſtify that my THERON is a child of God, without performing the mighty work of ſanctification? Is THERON obliged to give credit to its witneſs? By no means.—If the holy Spirit "takes away the heart "of ſtone, and gives you an heart of

" fleſh; writes God's law in your heart, " and puts truth in your inward part; ſo " that you walk in his ſtatutes and keep his " commandments;" — the work is done. You are a true convert. You will be ſaved. But without this, all is nothing.

THER. But have not many good men had this immediate witneſs and teſtimony of the Spirit I am pleading for?

PAUL. How can you know, my dear THERON, that ever there was a good man, ſince the foundation of the world, who had this witneſs? We have no inſtance in ſcripture, nor does the word of God lead us ever to look for ſuch a thing.

THER. How can I know? — Strange queſtion! When ſome of the beſt men in the world have held to the immediate witneſs.

PAUL. If we do certainly know our good eſtate by our ſanctification; is not the immediate witneſs needleſs? If men do not certainly know they are good men, by their ſanctification; who on earth can tell, but that they are hypocrites? and ſo, but that their immediate witneſs comes from the devil? If they cannot tell, — to be ſure, you and I cannot. Nor will their immediate witneſs prove the contrary; unleſs you can demonſtrate, that Satan never " transforms himſelf into an angel of " light." Beſides, men may 'hold to 'the immediate witneſs, that never had it, — through ſome miſtake. And if men

have Aſſurance by their ſanctification, it is not very likely that God ſhould make them an immediate revelation, merely to clear up a point already clear: that is, work a kind of miracle, when there is no need of it. Beſides, my dear THERON, how will you know, whether your immediate revelation comes from God, or from the devil? Will you know by the fruits? No. For this is to 'try the witneſs of the Spirit, by the ſin-'cerity of your graces.' And then, as you ſay, 'the teſtimony of the Spirit will ſtand 'you in no ſtead,' will be of no ſervice. Will you know without any reſpect to the fruits? But how? Leave holineſs out of the account, and what is there of this kind but what the devil can do? If he can, how do you know but he will? how do you know but he does? Go to the Anabaptiſts in *Germany*, in *Luther*'s time; go to the Enthuſiaſts in *England*, in *Cromwell*'s time; and ſee what the devil has done in former ages. Yea, I could name towns and perſons in *New England*, where and in whom Satan's mighty works have been to be ſeen, within leſs than twenty years ago. All the country knows, that ſome who appeared to have the higheſt confidence of a title to heaven, have ſufficiently proved to the world that they were deluded, by their immoral lives ſince. Will you after all ſay, that it is a ſin to doubt? and that you ought to be "ſtrong in Faith, and give glory to God?"

Yet you muſt remember, that it is all, 'without any evidence from ſcripture, 'ſenſe, or reaſon.' And this you know! and this you own!

Who, my dear THERON, who that hath a ſoul to ſave, would, with his eyes open, dare to venture his ALL for ETERNITY on ſuch a foundation as this! But, which is ſtill more ſurpriſing, who, among all rational creatures, can look upon that foundation, which Chriſt himſelf calls a ROCK, but as the ſtalk of a tulip, compared with this (q)!

O, my dear THERON, you will excuſe me this freedom, this kind and well-meant freedom. A miniſter of Chriſt ought not to flatter. Nor is it your intereſt to be ſoothed. The plain naked honeſt truth is what we all need to know. See with your own eyes. Judge for your own ſelf. For your own precious immortal ſoul lies at ſtake.

As to the THREE QUESTIONS you propoſed, you have now my opinion, and the ſum is this; The true convert having, in regeneration, had his eyes opened to behold the glory of God and Jeſus Chriſt, the glory of the Law and of the Goſpel, he approves of the Law as holy, juſt and good; he believes the Goſpel to be from God, acquieſces in that way of life, truſts

(q) The Reader may ſee this ſubject, viz. The witneſs of the Spirit, thoroughly diſcuſſed in Mr EDWARDS *on Religious Affections*.

in Chriſt the great Mediator, returns home to God through him, to be for ever the Lord's: and being united to Chriſt by Faith, he receives the holy Spirit to dwell in him for ever. In conſequence of which he brings forth fruit; growing in grace, and perſevering therein, through all changes and trials, to the end of his life. And ſo, an Aſſurance of a title to eternal life is in ſuch ſort attainable by believers, in all ordinary caſes, that it muſt be owing to their fault, if they do not enjoy it. However, no honeſt man ought to believe his ſtate to be good, with more confidence than in exact proportion to his evidence. Nor is there any evidence that will paſs with our final Judge, or that ought to be of any weight with us, but real holineſs. A communication of divine grace, in a large and very ſenſible degree, is that whereby the Spirit of God makes it evident to our conſciences beyond all doubt, that we are the children of God; and not by an immediate revelation.

THER. But what do you think of the caſe of Backſliders? May not they be in the dark about their ſtate? And what ought they to do?

PAUL. They may be in the dark, and full of doubts and fears; nor can they ever find reſt to their ſouls, until they remember from whence they have fallen, repent, and return home to God through Jeſus Chriſt. As

their departing from God is the ſource of all their wo; ſo their caſe admits of no remedy, but to repent and return to God through Jeſus Chriſt again. It would do a backſlider no good to go to God, and ſay, 'Pardon is mine; Grace is mine; Chriſt 'and all his ſpiritual Bleſſings are mine.' For his Religion does not grow up from this belief; but from "beholding, as in a "glaſs, the glory of the Lord." But I have not time to enter upon this ſubject. I recommend to you Mr SHEPARD *on the Parable of the Ten Virgins*; in which if ſome expreſſions are not ſo accurate, yet on the whole it is one of the beſt books I know of, for ſaints under backſlidings. It is ſo uſeful a book, that I wiſh there was one of them in every chriſtian family.

Here, my dear ASPASIO, the converſation ſtopt. I ſat ſilent—I was ſelf-condemned—Eternity all opened to my view: 'I am a 'loſt creature—heaven pity my caſe!'—The tears rolled from my eyes—I could conceal my caſe no longer; I was perſuaded, PAULINUS had a tender compaſſionate heart—therefore I addreſſed him in the following manner.

THER. Indeed, Sir, I need not hear you upon the caſe of a backſliding ſaint. I have heard enough already; I am convinced I was never right. I thought ſo, before I came to ſee you; and all you have ſaid has confirmed me in this opinion. I have

acted the part of a diſputant; but I have done it only for light,—to ſee what anſwers you would make to what might be ſaid. Alas, I have all to begin anew! juſt every ſtep I have taken is wrong: my firſt manifeſtation of the love of Chriſt, and pardon of my ſins, was wrong: the thing revealed for truth, was a lie. My firſt act of Faith was wrong: the thing believed for truth, was a lie. My love and joy, and all my religion was wrong: only the reſult of ſelf-love and deluſion. My living by Faith was wrong: It was only quieting my conſcience, by holding faſt my deluſion. My averſion to ſanctification's being the only evidence of a good eſtate, was wrong: I could not ſtand trial by that teſt; and yet nothing elſe will paſs at the great tribunal, with my final Judge. But I could have no comfort this way. It tended only to doubts and fears. And doubts and fears tended to deſtroy all my Religion. All my Religion was founded in deluſion; nor was there any way for it to ſubſiſt, but to hold faſt deluſion, and refuſe to let it go. I have been doing ſo now for a long time—and had continued to do ſo to my dying day, had not ſome of thoſe texts of ſcripture you have ſo often referred to, given me a ſhock. And laſt week I had ſuch awful apprehenſions of the dreadfulneſs of eternal damnation, the amazing dreadfulneſs of going into eternity ſelf-deceived, as penetrated my very heart.—

This induced me to make you theſe viſits. And now you ſee my caſe—my dreadful caſe! O dear PAULINUS, be you my Friend, my ſpiritual Guide! What ſhall I do?

PAUL. How much are poor loſt ſinners, in this benighted world, to be pitied! Generally their days, their precious days, are ſpent away ſecure in ſin! If at any time they are a little awakened to ſee their danger, how apt are they to take any way for comfort, but the right (r)! We are actually in ſo ruined a ſtate, that unleſs God interpoſes, of his mere ſovereign grace, and by the influences of his bleſſed Spirit guides us right, we ſhall wander from the narrow road, get loſt, and periſh (s)! We are enemies to God, blind to his beauty, diſinclined to a reconciliation, averſe to real holineſs: and any kind of falſe Religion ſuits ſuch depraved hearts, better than the true. Really to love God for his own infinite amiableneſs, to chooſe him for our portion, to look upon ſin as an infinite evil, to eſteem the law as holy, juſt and good, which requires ſinleſs perfection on pain of eternal damnation, and to place all our dependence on free grace through Jeſus Chriſt, are, of all things, moſt contrary to our corrupt biaſſes. Our native diſinclination to the right way, renders us apt to take the wrong: And having once

(r) Matt. vii. 13, 14. (s) Matt. xi. 25.

took it, obſtinately to perſiſt in it(*t*). Happy for you, my dear THERON, that you are brought ſo far to ſee your error!

And for your future conduct, take theſe hints;

(1.) Beware you return not to that fleſh-pleaſing, preſumptuous way of living, which had well nigh proved your ruin. Your friends may invite you back; your love of eaſe and preſent comfort, will ſecond all their arguments, and give them ten-fold more weight than they really have. Know it, O my THERON, there is a long eternity before you. It is worth your while to "ſtrive to "enter in at the ſtrait gate:" Yea, to "take "the kingdom of heaven by violence(*u*)." Therefore, count no ſelf-denial, no pains, no endeavours too great; but "do with thy "might what thy hand findeth to do."

(2.) It is abſolutely neceſſary, that you ſee your need of CHRIST, in order to come

(*t*) Jonah ii. 8. "They that obſerve lying vanities, "forſake their own mercy;" that is, go contrary to their own intereſt. How often have theſe words been applied, by ſome writers, to perſuade chriſtleſs ſinners to believe, that all the bleſſings of the Goſpel are their own! When, rather, they ſtand as a warning to all, "not to obſerve lying vanities," leſt they "forſake "their own mercy," and go contrary to their own eternal intereſt. Nothing being more contrary to the intereſt of a poor ſinner, than to believe deluſion, and ſettle down on a falſe foundation.

(*u*) Mr EDWARDS's Sermons on *Preſſing into the Kingdom*, and on *the Juſtice of God in the Damnation of Sinners*, are proper for ſuch as THERON.

to him. Coming to Chriſt, in its own nature, ſuppoſes that we ſee our need of him. You cannot ſee what you need Chriſt for, unleſs you ſee your true character and ſtate according to law. The Law is the appointed ſchool-maſter, to lead ſinners to Chriſt. The Law requires perfect obedience, on pain of eternal damnation. It requires us to love God with all our heart, as being infinitely lovely. The leaſt defect merits eternal wo. If you take meaſure by this Law, as your rule, your true character will appear, — "dead in ſin; at enmity againſt God; not "ſubject to his Law, neither indeed can be. And if you judge of your ſtate according to this Law, you are "condemned already, "and the wrath of God abideth on you" —you are loſt—you "ſtand guilty before "God." And if the Law is holy, juſt and good, your mouth is ſtopt. The Lord is "righteous when he ſpeaketh, and clear "when he judgeth," although you ſhould periſh for ever. All this you muſt ſee, Yea, you muſt feel it, through and through your heart, as did the Apoſtle *Paul*. "The "commandment came, ſin revived, and I "died." It is for want of thorough conviction, that ſo many awakened ſinners take up with falſe comforts. Their wound was never ſearched to the bottom; it was ſkinned over too ſoon. And ſuch ſlightly cures, though more eaſily performed, may

prove

prove fatal in the end. But let your legal convictions be ever ſo deep, you will periſh, unleſs, of his mere ſovereign grace.

(3.) "He who commanded the light to "ſhine out of darkneſs, ſhines in your heart, "to give you the light of the knowledge of "the glory of God, in the face of Jeſus "Chriſt." You are blind, quite blind, to the divine beauty. And conſequently, blind to the beauty of the divine Law. And ſo, conſequently, blind too to the beauty of Chriſt, as dying to anſwer the demands of the Law. And conſequently under the power of unbelief. Every unregenerate man has the ſpirit of Infidelity in his heart (*x*). You can never cordially believe, that the Son of God became incarnate, and died to anſwer the demands of a Law in its own nature too ſevere. Such a ſubſtitution cannot appear to be of God, glorious and divine; but rather ſhocking! You can never heartily approve of the Law (which requires us to love God for his own divine excellencies, with all our hearts, on pain of eternal damnation for the leaſt defect) as holy, juſt and good, unleſs God appears in your eyes as ONE INFINITELY LOVELY. So depraved are you, ſo entirely devoid of a reliſh for divine beauty, that God never will appear thus amiable in your eyes, unleſs you are born of the Spirit, have divine

(*x*) 1 John v. 1. Rom. x. 9. Pſal. xiv. 1.

life immediately communicated to you from God, have a ſupernatural and divine ſenſe, taſte, reliſh, imparted to you from on high. Your heart is like the Chaos; the earth was "without form and void, and darkneſs was "upon the face of the deep." And dark, eternally dark, it would have been, had not God ſaid, "Let there be light." So, unleſs "he who commanded the light to ſhine "out of darkneſs, ſhines in your heart," you will abide in eternal darkneſs, blind to divine beauty; to the glories of God and Chriſt, of Law and Goſpel. And if the Goſpel continues thus hid from you, you are loſt, for ever loſt (*y*).

If the divine Law, in itſelf, is not holy, juſt and good, Chriſt dying to anſwer its demands cannot make it ſo. If the Law was too ſevere, Chriſt's death was a moſt ſhocking affair! A diſlike of the divine Law, as too rigorous, is the root of all the chief errors in the chriſtian world; yea, it is the root of the prevailing Infidelity of the preſent age. And it now lies at the bottom of all your hard thoughts of God, O my THERON; which the devil is not the author of, as ſome imagine in ſuch caſes; and is a mighty bar to your believing in Chriſt. And nothing can effectually remove it, but divine light, imparted in regeneration (*z*).

(*y*) 2 Cor. iv. 3, 6.

(*z*) No man can underſtandingly and heartily look to, truſt in, or depend upon the mediation of Chriſt, unleſs he

(4.) Bid a final adieu to vain and carnal companions, to all ſinful and carnal pleaſures and paſtimes, and to every known ſin; all

he ſees his need of him as a Mediator. No man can ſee his need of the mediation of Chriſt, unleſs he ſees that which renders his mediation needful. Now the goodneſs and excellency of the divine Law, which we have broke, is the only thing which originally rendered the mediation of Chriſt needful. But for this, the ſinner might have been ſaved without a Mediator, without an atonement, as well as with. Nay, better. For if the Law were too ſevere, it had evidently been more honourable for God to have repealed, or abated it, than to have appointed his Son to anſwer its demands in our ſtead.

Some ſeem to think, that the Law, although ſuited to the ſtrength of man before the fall, and ſo a good Law for an innocent, holy creature, yet is too rigorous for a fallen world. And therefore imagine, that Chriſt died to purchaſe an abatement, and to bring it down to a level with our preſent weakneſs. But if the Law was too ſevere, the juſtice of the divine nature would have moved the Governor of the world to have made all proper abatements; nor was the death of Chriſt needful in the caſe. Surely Chriſt need not die, merely to get juſtice done us.

Some ſeem to look upon God the Father, as all made up of wrath, the ſinner's enemy: And on God the Son, as all made up of love, the ſinner's friend. And imagine, he died to aſſuage his Father's anger, and move his compaſſions towards poor ſinners. And ſo they love Chriſt, while they hate God and his Law.—But this is all a mere Chimera. The Father is as full of love and goodneſs, as the Son. The Son is as holy and juſt, as great a friend to the Law, and as great an enemy to ſin, as the Father. They are both of one heart. Yea, they are both one God. *John* x. 30.

Some ſeem to reſolve the whole of God's Law and Government, and the death of Chriſt, into the mere

tend to ſtupify the heart. And by reading, meditation and prayer, endeavour with all your might to obtain a realizing ſenſe of your true character and ſtate. Caſt yourſelf at the foot of ſovereign grace, and cry, with the blind man, "Lord, that I might receive

arbitrary will of God: As though the whole were not the reſult of wiſdom, of infinite wiſdom, but rather of mere arbitrary will. But it does not appear by ſcripture, or otherwiſe, that the infinitely wiſe God ever determines any thing without reaſon, or does any thing but what is wiſe for him to do. But rather, the whole of divine revelation joins to confirm the truth of St *Paul*'s obſervation, that God "worketh all things after the COUNSEL of his own will." (Eph. i. 11) All his perfections, if I may ſo ſpeak, ſit in council: and all his degrees and works are the reſult of infinite holineſs, juſtice and goodneſs, directed by infinite wiſdom.

There is but one way to ſolve the difficulty. There is but one thing can ever ſatisfy our hearts. A ſight of the glory of the God of glory, will open to view the grounds and reaſons of the Law, and convince us that it is holy, juſt and good, glorious and amiable, and worthy to be kept in credit, to be magnified and made honourable, by the obedience and death of the Son of God.—But then, if the Law is good, we who have broke it, are not fit to live. Death is our due. The Judge of all the earth cannot but do right. His nature, Law and honour, call aloud for our deſtruction. He cannot be juſt, if he do not deſtroy us. It will bring everlaſting reproach upon his Government, to ſpare us, conſidered merely as in ourſelves. When this is felt in our hearts, then, and not till then, ſhall we feel our need of Chriſt, and be prepared to look to the "free "grace of God through the redemption that is in "Chriſt," and to exerciſe "Faith in his blood, who "was ſet forth to be a propitiation, to declare God's "righteouſneſs, that he might be juſt, and yet the "Juſtifier of him that believeth in Jeſus."

" my ſight!" ' That I may ſee and know ' what I am, what I deſerve, what I need; ' and the only way to obtain relief, by free ' grace through Jeſus Chriſt.' However, that you may not truſt in your own doings to recommend you to the divine favour, nor be encouraged from your own goodneſs to hope for mercy, conſtantly remember,

(5.) That the divine Law, which you are under, requires, that you love God for himſelf; whereas, all you do is merely from ſelf-love. Yea, it requires you to love God " with all your heart;" whereas, there is no love to God in your heart. And it requires this ſinleſs perfection on pain of eternal damnation for the leaſt defect; ſo that by Law you are already condemned. By mere Law you are therefore abſolutely and for ever undone. You " ſtand guilty before " God."—But mere Law is the rule of right, and ſtandard of juſtice. If juſtice ſhould take place, you then ſee your doom. There is no hope from this quarter. Wherefore you lie at the mercy of God, his mere mercy, who is abſolutely unobliged to grant you any relief, for any thing you can do. He might juſtly have left all mankind in this ſtate, without a Saviour. And he may, on the ſame grounds, as juſtly leave you in this ſtate, without a ſanctifier. He did not give his Son to ſave this loſt world for our righteouſneſs ſake: Yea, had we been

righteous, we ſhould not have needed his Son to die in our ſtead. Nor does God give his holy Spirit, to convert any poor periſhing ſinner, for his righteouſneſs ſake: Yea, it is his being entirely deſtitute of all that is ſpiritually good, and dead in ſin, that occaſions his ſtanding in need of converting grace. And although all the promiſes of God are "in Chriſt Jeſus Yea, "and in him Amen;" yet, as to thoſe who are out of Chriſt, they are ſo far from being intitled to the promiſes, that "the wrath of "God abideth on them." Therefore,

(6.) If ever you are renewed by the holy Ghoſt, it will be, not for any goodneſs in you, but merely from God's ſelf moving mercy, and ſovereign grace, through Jeſus Chriſt (*a*).

(7.) How dreadful ſoever this repreſentation makes your caſe appear; yet, if this is your true ſtate, you muſt ſee it, that you may know your need of Chriſt and free grace, and be in a capacity, underſtandingly, to give a proper reception to the glad tidings of the Goſpel; namely, that through Chriſt God is ready to be reconciled to the returning penitent, who juſtifies God, approves his Law, quits all claims, and looks only to free grace, through Jeſus Chriſt, for ſalvation (*b*).

(*a*) Tit. iii. 5, 6.
(*b*) Luke xviii. 13. Rom. iii. 24, 25, 26.

(8.) Saving Faith conſiſts in looking to free grace, through Jeſus Chriſt, for ſalvation; thus viewing God's Law, and your own caſe, as they really be. And he that thus "believeth, ſhall be ſaved." Therefore, "repent and be converted, and your "ſins ſhall be blotted out. Behold, now "is the accepted time, and now is the "day of ſalvation!" And by me, one of Chriſt's miniſters, "God does beſeech you "to be reconciled; and I pray you in Chriſt's "ſtead, be you reconciled to God." For God hath made his only begotten Son to be a ſacrifice for ſin, that all who are united to him by a true and living Faith, might return to God with acceptance, and be juſtified, and have eternal life through him.

THER. Every word you have ſpoken, ſinks down into my heart. The Lord grant the truth may pierce my heart through and through. The reſt of my days I will devote to the buſineſs of my ſoul. I thank you for your kind inſtructions—I beg your prayers—The anguiſh of my heart calls me to retire. Adieu, dear Sir, Adieu!

PAUL. May the only wiſe God be your effectual inſtructor, my THERON!—Adieu!

To my dear ASPASIO, theſe dialogues are preſented, by

Your Affectionate

THERON.

LETTER II.

THERON to ASPASIO.

New England, Mar. 12, 1759.

Dear ASPASIO,

MY melancholy Letter of *December* laſt, with a copy of the ſubſtance of the converſation I had with PAULINUS at three ſeveral times, you have doubtleſs received long ago, as it is now three months ſince I wrote. If you have been impatient at hearing nothing from your Friend for ſo long a time, I more: toſſed to and fro for months together, like a feeble ſhip at ſea in a tempeſtuous night, ready every moment to ſink.

At firſt (I mean, after I had left PAULINUS, and retired, as I had determined, to ſpend much time in meditation and prayer) I called in queſtion a maxim he ſeemed to take for granted; that "we are all, by nature, under a Law, requiring perfect obedience, on pain of eternal damnation:" Which he ſo inſiſted was a glorious Law, holy, juſt and good. Thus I thought with myſelf—'Perfect obedience! That is more

'than we can yield. And am I for ever 'loſt for the firſt offence? How can that 'be juſt! Can the kind Father of the 'univerſe require more of his creature 'man, than he can do? and then puniſh 'him with eternal damnation for not do-'ing! Can this be right!' Indeed I now felt I had an Arminian heart.

But on a certain evening, as I was reading St *Paul*'s epiſtles to the *Romans* and *Galatians*, in which he affirms, that "the wrath "of God is revealed from heaven againſt "all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of "men;" that the very heathen themſelves are without excuſe; that "the whole "world ſtand guilty before God, and "every mouth ſtopt; that the Law curſes "every man who continueth not in all "things written in the book of the Law to "do them; and that Chriſt was made "a curſe for us, to redeem us from the "curſe of that very Law;" I was greatly ſhocked and confounded. One while, I ſaid, 'This Law cannot be right.' But again, I ſaid, Why then was it not repealed? Why did the Son of God bear its curſe, and die to anſwer its demands? I looked thro' the Old Teſtament, I looked through the New; and this notion of the Law, I ſaw, was ſo inwrought into both, that it muſt be granted; or, the whole of divine revelation given up. I felt the heart of an

Infidel. I was full of doubts and ſcruples as to the truth of the Bible. And when I reflected on the external evidences of divine revelation, as repreſented by our late writers, particularly by Dr *Leland*, whoſe *View of deiſtical Writers* I had lately read, I was drove even to Atheiſm. For if there is a God, the Bible muſt be true; but if the Bible is true, the Law in all its rigour is holy, juſt and good.

Thus I was unſettled in all my principles, and ſet afloat as on a boiſterous ocean, like a ſhip without a compaſs or an helm; in great anxiety and deep perplexity, ready many times to conclude to go back, at all adventures, to my old hope, as the only way for reſt: thinking, I had as good live and die on a falſe hope, as live and die in deſpair.

Till on a certain time, I began thus to reaſon in my heart;—'Whence all theſe 'doubts, O my ſoul! Whence all theſe 'Arminian, Socinian, Deiſtical, Atheiſtical thoughts! Whence have they all 'ariſen? From viewing the Law of God, 'as requiring perfect Obedience, on pain 'of eternal damnation. But why? Had 'I rather turn an Infidel, than approve 'the Law as holy, juſt and good? Is this 'my heart! Once, I thought, I loved 'God, and loved his Law, and loved the 'Goſpel. Where am I now!' Thoſe words of the Apoſtle ſeemed to picture my very caſe, "The carnal mind is enmity "againſt God, and is not ſubject to his

" Law, neither indeed can be. (*Rom.* viii. 7.) This text engaged my attention, and fixed my thoughts. And looking into my heart more and more, I found the ſpirit of an enemy to God and to his Law in full poſſeſſion of my ſoul.

Till now, I had entertained, at leaſt ſometimes, a ſecret hope, that my ſtate was good; although it ſeemed as if I had quite given it up. But now I began in a new manner to ſee, or rather to feel, I was dead in ſin.

A realizing ſenſe of God, as the infinitely great Being, the almighty Governor of the world, holy and juſt, a ſin-revenging God, a conſuming fire againſt the workers of iniquity, daily grew upon my heart, and ſet home the Law in all its rigour. A freſh view of all my evil ways from my youth up, continually preyed upon my ſpirits. ETERNITY! ETERNITY! O how dreadful it ſeemed! I watched, I prayed, I faſted, I ſpared no pains to obtain a humble, broken, contrite heart. But notwithſtanding my greateſt efforts, my heart grew worſe, my caſe more deſperate: till, in the iſſue, I found myſelf abſolutely without ſtrength,—dead in ſin,—loſt,—condemned by Law,—ſelf-condemned, my mouth ſtopt,—guilty before God. I was forced to be ſilent; as it was but fair and right that God ſhould be an enemy to me, who was an enemy to him; and but juſt, if

he ſhould for ever caſt me off. And in this caſe I had periſhed, had not mere ſovereign grace interpoſed. But in the midſt of this midnight-darkneſs, when all hope ſeemed to be gone, at a moment when I leaſt expected relief, (for, "the commandment came, "ſin revived, and I died) even now, God, "who commanded the light to ſhine out "of darkneſs, ſhined in my heart."— Thus was the caſe.

It was in the evening (after the day had been ſpent in faſting and prayer) as I was walking in a neighbouring grove, my thoughts fixed, with the utmoſt attention, —on God, as a conſuming fire againſt his obſtinate enemies, —on the Law, as curſing the man that continueth not in all things written therein to do them,—on my whole life, as one continued ſeries of rebellion,—on my heart, as not only dead to God and to all good, but full of enmity againſt the divine Law and Government, and (ſhocking to remember!) full of enmity againſt God himſelf. Feeling that my whole heart was thus dead in ſin, and contrary to God, I felt it was a gone caſe with me: There was no hope,—no, not the leaſt,—from any good in me, or ever to be expected from me. I lay at God's mercy, forfeited, —juſtly condemned, loſt, helpleſs, undone! And, "I will have mercy, "on whom I will have mercy," I clearly ſaw was the fixed reſolution of the Al-

mighty. Thus ſtood my caſe. A poor, wretched, ſinful, guilty creature, compleatly ruined in myſelf! I retired to the moſt remote part of the grove. Where, hid under the darkneſs of the evening, and the ſhade of ſpreading trees, no eye could ſee me. —Firſt, I ſmote on my breaſt; but could not look up to heaven, nor ſpeak one word. I fell on my knees: But I could not ſpeak. I fell proſtrate on the ground: And felt as one ready to ſink into eternal ruin. Having no hope, unleſs from the ſovereign good pleaſure of my angry Judge. —As I lay proſtrate on the ground, a new ſcene gradually opened to view. It was new, and it was exceeding glorious!— GOD appeared not only infinitely Great and infinitely Holy, as the SOVEREIGN of the whole univerſe; but alſo infinitely Glorious: even ſo glorious, as to be worthy of all the love and honour, which his Law requires. The Law appeared holy, juſt and good; I could not but approve it, from my very heart: and ſaid within myſelf, ere I was aware, 'Let all heaven for ever 'love and adore the infinitely glorious MA-'JESTY, although I receive my juſt deſert, 'and periſh for ever!' Next came into view the whole Goſpel-way of life, by free grace through Jeſus Chriſt; the wiſdom, glory and beauty of which cannot be expreſſed. The Law did bear the divine image, and was glorious; but the Goſpel

exhibited all the divine perfections in a ſtill brighter manner, and far exceeded in glory. I ſaw, God might, conſiſtently with his honour, in this way receive the returning ſinner, however ill-deſerving. I ſaw, he was ready to do it,—that all might come,—even the vileſt and the worſt,—encouraged by the ſelf-moving goodneſs and boundleſs grace of God, and the mediation, merits and atonement of Chriſt; I looked up to God through Jeſus Chriſt, for mercy; and through Jeſus Chriſt gave up myſelf to the Lord, to be for ever his, to love him, and live to him for ever. Here, proſtrate on the ground, I thus lay above an hour, contemplating the ineffable glories of God, the beauty of his Law, and the ſuper-abundant excellency of the Goſpel-way of Life, by free grace through Jeſus Chriſt: I believed the Goſpel, I truſted in Chriſt, and gave up myſelf to God through him, to be for ever his, with a pleaſure divinely ſweet, infinitely preferable to the moſt agreeable ſenſations I ever had before experienced. What I enjoyed this hour, did more, unſpeakably more, than over-balance all the diſtreſſes of months paſt (*c*). To

(*c*) THERON's narrative of his former ſuppoſed converſion (*Letter* I.) and of his experiences (here) is not deſigned to ſuggeſt, that either falſe or true converts all experience things, in every circumſtance, juſt alike; but only to point out the general nature of theſe two kinds of converſion, in a manner ſo familiar,

relate how I ſpent the night, and how I have ſpent my days and nights ever ſince, I ſhall omit. But you ſhall ſoon hear again, my dear ASPASIO, from

Your affectionate

THERON.

familiar, that the weakeſt chriſtian may ſee the difference. And if any chriſtian cannot recollect ſo exactly the particulars of his firſt converſion, yet as all after-acts of grace are of the ſame nature with the firſt, a clear underſtanding of the true nature of ſaving grace, may help him to diſcern his true ſtate. *N. B.* What is the true nature of ſaving grace, is not to be decided by the experiences of this or that man, or party of men: but only by the word of God.

LETTER

LETTER III.

THERON to ASPASIO.

New England, April 2, 1759.

Dear ASPASIO,

WITH pleaſure I now again ſit down to write to my diſtant Friend, and ſend my heart beyond the *Atlantic* to my ASPASIO. For neither time, nor place, nor any change, can wipe your memory from my mind.

Methinks, were I now with you, as once at the houſe, the hoſpitable houſe, of the wealthy and illuſtrious PHILENOR, I would tell you all my heart. I remember how you urged me to believe; and how I longed to find ſome ſafe foundation, ſome ſure evidence, on which to build my Faith; and with *Thomas*, to cry, "My Lord, My God!" —Now I have found it! I have found it! "I believe that Jeſus is the Chriſt (*d*)." I believe, that "God hath ſet him forth to "be a propitiation,—to declare his righte-"ouſneſs,—that he might be juſt, and the

(*d*) 1 John v. 1.

" juſtifier of him which believeth in Jeſus " (*e*). I believe, that God raiſed him " from the dead (*f*). I believe that " Chriſt is entered into heaven, now to ap- " pear in the preſence of God," as the jewiſh high prieſt of old entered into the holy of holies on the day of atonement (*g*), and that he is " the way to the Father " (*h*)." The " door, by whom men enter " in (*i*)." And that " whoſoever will, may " come to God through him (*k*)." Where- fore I am emboldened to " enter into the " holieſt by the blood of Jeſus," even into the very preſence of the thrice holy ONE of *Iſrael*, in whoſe ſight " the heavens " are not clean;" and to come to God in " full Aſſurance of Faith, nothing doubt- " ing" but that God is as willing to be re- conciled through Chriſt, as the Father was to receive the returning Prodigal; and as ready to " give his holy Spirit to them " that aſk him," as ever parent was to give bread to an hungry child (*l*.) " For " he that ſpared not his own Son, but de- " livered him up for us all, how ſhall he " not with him alſo freely give us all things;" if we accept his Son as he is offered, and come to God through him for all things, as we are invited (*m*)? For, God's honour

(*e*) Rom. iii. 25, 26. (*f*) Rom. x. 9.
(*g*) Heb. ix. 24. (*h*) John xiv. 6.
(*i*) John x. 9. (*k*) Rev. xxii. 17.
(*l*) Heb. x. 19—22. Matt. vii. 11.
(*m*) Rom. viii. 32. John i. 12. and xvi. 23.

is ſafe, God's Law is anſwered, God's juſtice is ſatisfied; and all my guilt, infinite as it is, is no bar in the way of my reception into the divine favour; free as his infinite grace, ſelf-moving as his boundleſs goodneſs is, and appears to be, by the gift of his Son.

This way of ſalvation, my dear ASPASIO, is glorious for God, ſafe for the ſinner, effectual to promote holineſs, even "the "power of God to ſalvation to every one "that believeth:" And if the Goſpel is true, there is no room to doubt. 'For 'we are conſtrained to believe on the clear-'eſt evidence.' Yea, 'our Aſſurance is 'impreſſed' by compleat demonſtration.

It is glorious for God. For God's Law and authority are as much honoured, as if the whole world had been damned: And his grace more glorified than if man had never fell. An incarnate God upon the croſs, in the room of a rebellious world, ſets God's infinite hatred of ſin, his inflexible reſolution to puniſh it, and the infinite goodneſs of his nature, in a light infinitely clear, infinitely bright. And contains a fund of inſtruction, which never can be exhauſted by angels and ſaints, throughout the endleſs ages of eternity. The more I think, the more I am ſwallowed up! confounded! overwhelmed! O "the height, the depth, "the length, the breadth of the love of "God, which paſſeth all underſtanding!

"O the depth of the riches of the wiſ-
"dom and knowledge of God!" The creation of the univerſe was a great work: It cauſed the eternal power and godhead of the Creator clearly to be ſeen: But compared to the incarnation and death of the Son of God, the Creator, it is not to be mentioned, nor is it worthy to come into mind. Even the application of Chriſt's redemption, in the latter day, is a more glorious work than the firſt creation of the world. "Behold, I create new heavens, and a new
"earth: and the former ſhall not be re-
"membered, nor come into mind (*n*)." Indeed, it had been but a ſmall thing for the Creator, by his almighty Word, to have called millions of ſuch ſyſtems as ours into being,—a thing not worthy to be noticed,—nay, ſcarce worth one ſingle thought—compared with—With what? Let all nature tremble at the news,—the Incarnation, and the Death of the ALMIGHTY CREATOR, in the room of his rebel-creatures, that the honour of his Father's Law and Government might be effectually ſecured, while ſovereign infinite grace interpoſes to ſave the ſelf-ruined, hell-deſerving rebels, to the eternal diſappointment of Satan, God's enemy, and our mortal foe!

And can it now, after all this, be a queſtion, whether God is ready to be reconciled to thoſe, who, on his own invita-

(*n*) Iſa. lxv. 17.

tion, return to him through Jeſus Chriſt? Or can it be a queſtion, whether Chriſt is willing to be their Mediator and High Prieſt, in the court of heaven, in the holy of holies above? What! after God has given his Son to die, that conſiſtently with his honour he might receive ſuch to favour, he not willing! Infinitely incredible! What! after the Son of God has left his Father's boſom, to lie in a manger! to groan in the garden! And "be aſtoniſhed, O ye heavens, "and be ye horribly afraid!"—to hang and die upon the croſs, in the room of a God-hating, Chriſt-murdering world; that he might honour his Father's Law, break up Satan's plot, and open a way for the ſinner's return! Yet he not willing! What! willing to die on the croſs! and not willing to mediate in heaven! Infinitely incredible! Yea, if poſſible, more than infinitely incredible! So certain, my dear ASPASIO, as the Goſpel is true, juſt ſo certain may your THERON be, that God is ready to be reconciled to the ſinner, who returns to him through Jeſus Chriſt. Nor does he need a new revelation in the caſe: nor does he need to be aſſured of any propoſition not plainly revealed in the Goſpel. Enough has been already DONE! enough has been already SAID! But never did your THERON believe theſe things with all his heart, till by ſeeing the glory of the God of glory, he ſaw the grounds and reaſons of the Law, pro-

nounced it holy, juſt and good, and worthy to be magnified and made honourable, even by the death of GOD'S OWN SON (*n*).

And this kind of Faith, in the nature of things, cannot be without works. For, while your THERON, through the influences of the holy Spirit, doth "with open face "behold, as in a glaſs, the glory of the "Lord;" what can he do, but love, admire, adore the God of glory; and give up himſelf for ever to him through Jeſus Chriſt? And now, "how can we that are "dead to ſin, live any longer therein? We "are crucified with Chriſt—buried with "him—riſen with him"—and can ſin after all have dominion over us! impoſſible (*o*). The gratitude, the ingenuity of unrenewed nature, I grant, is not to be depended upon. "Iſrael ſang God's praiſe, but ſoon forgat "his works." But, "beholding, as in a "glaſs, the glory of the Lord," from day to day through the courſe of our lives, we are, we cannot but be, "changed into the "ſame image, from glory to glory, even "as by the Spirit of the Lord (*p*)."

And, believing the Goſpel to be true, no doubt remains of the ſafety of our returning to God through Jeſus Chriſt. His glory and beauty inclines me to return. His grace through Chriſt puts courage in my heart. I return. I find reſt to my

(*n*) 1 John v. 1. (*o*) Rom. vi. 2—14.
(*p*) 2 Cor. iii. 18.

weary ſoul. And by this I know, my 'Faith 'is real, and no deluſion,' even "becauſe "he hath given me of his Spirit (*q*);" ſet his ſeal upon my heart (*r*), made me his child, in the very temper of my ſoul (*s*), and "in "my heart his Law is written, and in his "ways I love to walk (*t*)."—But, as to this, heaven forbid! that your THERON's confidence ſhould ever be greater than his evidence; his evidence, not only now, but in all future times.

I am, for ever,

Your Affectionate

THERON.

(*q*) 1 John iv. 13. (*r*) Eph. i. 13.
(*s*) Rom. viii. 16. (*t*) Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.

LETTER IV.

THERON to ASPASIO.

New England, April 3, 1759.

Dear ASPASIO,

MANY an agreeable hour have we wandered over all the works of nature; viewed the heavens above, the earth beneath, and ſurveyed the mighty ocean; nor did you ever fail to intermingle devout reflections. If now inſtead of painting the beauties of the creation, we riſe at once to contemplate the glories of the CREATOR, glories infinitely ſuperior to thoſe of fields and foreſts, gardens and palaces; yea, infinitely ſuperior to the bright expanſe of heaven, adorned with all its ſhining orbs,—no theme can my ASPASIO better pleaſe.

GOD! how awful is the name! how great is the Being! "Behold, the nations are as a "drop of the Bucket, and are counted as the "ſmall duſt of the balance: Yea, all na-"tions before him are as nothing, and they "are counted to him leſs than nothing, and "vanity." And ſo great is the excellency

of the DIVINE MAJESTY, ſo exceeding great is his beauty; that to behold his glory, and love and honour and enjoy him, is heaven itſelf: It is the chief happineſs of all that world. The Seraphim, while he ſitteth on his throne, high and lifted up, as the great MONARCH of the univerſe, through the brightneſs of his glory, cover their faces, unable to behold; and, as in a perfect extaſy, cry, Holy, holy, holy! This is his character, the character he exemplifies in all his conduct, as Lord of hoſts, as Governor of the world; in view of which, they add, "The whole earth is full of his "GLORY (*u*)."

The two grandeſt affairs, which, according to ſcripture, ever have been, or ever will be, tranſacted in the government of this glorious Monarch, are the work of our REDEMPTION by the death of his Son, and the final JUDGMENT of the world. Theſe, therefore, let us contemplate, that in them "we may behold, as in a glaſs, "the glory of the LORD."

Who was his SON?—"The brightneſs "of his glory, and the expreſs image of "his perſon: By whom, and for whom, "all things were created." Loved equally to himſelf, and honoured with equal honours in all the world above. Let us view him on the croſs incarnate! view him there, as an

(*u*) Iſa. vi. 3.

an incarnate GOD, dying for ſinners! and fix our attention, whole hours together, on this greateſt and moſt wonderful of all God's works! The plan was laid in heaven. This great event was determined in the council there (*x*). All the perfections of the godhead ſat in council, when it was decreed the Son of God ſhould die. Strange decree! Why was it made? Aſtoniſhing! Why did it ever come to paſs? Did he die to move the compaſſions of his almighty Father towards a rebellious race? No. For, to give his Son thus to die, was greater grace, than at one ſovereign ſtroke to have cancelled all our debt, and pardoned all the world. Did he die, to take away or leſſen the evil nature and ill-deſert of ſin? No. For infinite purity and impartial juſtice muſt look upon the rebellions of a revolted world as odious and ill-deſerving, as if he had not died. He died, to bear the puniſhment due to us. We were under the curſe; he was made a curſe in our room; "ſet forth to "be a propitiation," by his holy Father, "to declare his righteouſneſs," and ſhew the rectitude of his Government in the eyes of all created intelligences; "that "he might be juſt," do as his Law threatens, and yet not damn, but "juſtify "the ſinner that believeth in Jeſus."

(*x*) Acts iv. 28.

Eternal damnation was our due, according to the divine Law: a Law not founded in arbitrary will. A Law, arbitrarily made, may be arbitrarily repealed; but a Law only declaring what is fit, muſt for ever ſtand in force. To riſe in rebellion againſt the infinitely glorious Majeſty of heaven, deſerved eternal damnation; as he is infinitely worthy of the higheſt love and honour from all his intelligent creatures. His infinite amiableneſs and honourableneſs, infinitely oblige us to love and honour him. All our heart and mind and ſtrength are his due. The leaſt defect deſerves eternal wo. Thus the omniſcient viewed the caſe. His Son, in the ſame view, approved the Law as ſtrictly juſt. Both looked on the ſacrifice and death of an incarnate God, in the room of ſinners, to open a way for their ſalvation, as a plan infinitely preferable to the Law's repeal by a ſovereign act. The Son had rather endure the moſt painful, ſhameful death, than that one tittle of the Law ſhould fail, it was ſo ſtrictly juſt! God ought to have his due. The Law barely aſſerts the right of the godhead. So much, however, was his due, as to be loved with all the heart, and obeyed in every thing. And ſo worthy was the Deity of this love and obedience, that the leaſt defect deſerved eternal death. 'It is right, it is right,' ſaid

the eternal SON, 'that the firſt inſtance or 'the leaſt degree of diſreſpect to my eternal 'Father, ſhould incur eternal ruin to the 'ſinning creature. And I had rather be-'come incarnate and die myſelf, than yield 'this point.' That God is infinitely amia-ble—that he ought to be loved with all our heart—that the infinite excellency of his na-ture infinitely obliges us,—can never be ſet in a ſtronger light, than it is by the croſs of CHRIST.

The infinite dignity of the Mediator, and the extreme ſufferings he underwent, as an equivalent to our eternal wo, in the loudeſt manner proclaim, that the Law was juſt—juſt in the eyes of God—and juſt in the eyes of his Son. A Law, threatning eternal damnation, infinite goodneſs would never have enacted, had not impartial juſtice called for it. Much leſs would infinite goodneſs have appointed God's own Son to anſwer its demands, if in its own na-ture too ſevere. To ſuppoſe the Son of God died to anſwer the demands of a Law, in its own nature cruel, is to make God a tyrant, and the death of his Son the moſt ſhocking affair that ever happened!

But what did this Law, of which we ſo often ſpeak, require? Say, my dear ASPA-SIO, what was the firſt and chief command? Your Maſter's anſwer you approve,—"Thou

" ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy " heart." But why was love required? Becauſe God was lovely. And why the penalty ſo great? Becauſe his lovelineſs was infinite. If the infinite amiableneſs of the divine Being does not lay an infinite obligation on his creatures, to love him for being what he is, how can we juſtify the Law's demands; or vindicate the wiſdom of God in the death of his Son?

From the croſs, where an incarnate God aſſerted the rights of the Godhead by his dying pains, let us paſs to the awful tribunal; where the ſame incarnate God, arrayed in all his Father's glory, with all the hoſts of heaven in his train, by the laſt ſentence, which he will pronounce upon his Father's enemies, dooming them to the burning lake, to welter for eternal ages in wo, will ſtill proclaim the juſtice of the Law. —Would infinite goodneſs, would our compaſſionate Saviour, would he who wept over *Jeruſalem*, the kind and tender-hearted Jeſus, love to pronounce a ſentence ſo infinitely dreadful, if it were not ſtrictly juſt! Yet he will do it, without the leaſt reluctance; yea, with the higheſt pleaſure: while angels and ſaints ſhout forth their Hallelujahs all around him.

But can this ever be accounted for, on any other hypotheſis, than that the infi-

nitely glorious MONARCH of the univerſe appears, clearly appears, in that ſolemn hour, to be infinitely worthy of all that love and honour his Law required, in being what he is; and ſo ſin an infinite evil?

If ſin is really an infinite evil, then it is meet that it ſhould be diſcountenanced and puniſhed as ſuch, that is, with an infinite puniſhment, that is, with the eternal pains of hell. And it was fit that the Governor of the world ſhould make a Law thus to puniſh it. And fit that this Law ſhould be magnified and made honourable. And even wiſe, in the eyes of infinite wiſdom, that one by nature GOD, ſhould become incarnate, and die in the ſinner's ſtead, rather than ſet the Law aſide. And on this hypotheſis, the final doom of the wicked may well appear perfectly beautiful in the eyes of all holy intelligences. But ſin cannot be an infinite evil, unleſs we are under infinite obligations to do otherwiſe.

LOVE is the thing required. Not merely a Love of gratitude to God, as an almighty Benefactor: but a love of eſteem, complacency and delight. We may feel grateful to a benefactor, merely as ſuch, without even a knowledge of his general character; yea, when his general character would not ſuit us, did we know it. The *Iſraelites*, notwithſtanding their joy and

gratitude at the ſide of the red-ſea, were far from a diſpoſition to be ſuited, to be pleaſed, to be enamoured, with ſuch a Being as GOD was. Yea, the more they knew of him, the leſs they ſeemed to like him; ſo that in leſs than two years they were for going back to *Egypt* again. But if we may feel grateful towards God, merely as our almighty Benefactor, without the knowledge of his true character; yet eſteem, complacence and delight, ſuppoſe his true character known; as that is the object of this kind of love. And what can lay us under infinite obligations to love God, in this ſenſe, but his own infinite AMIABLENESS? Yet the divine Law requires us to love God with this kind of love,—and that with all our hearts,—on pain of eternal damnation for the leaſt defect. And this Law was binding on all mankind, previouſly to a conſideration of the gift of Chriſt to be a Saviour.

While, therefore, the Law ſuppoſes our obligations to be infinite; and the death of the Son of God, and the final judgment, give the higheſt poſſible proof that the OMNISCIENT eſteems the Law exactly right; the infinite dignity, excellency and glory of the MOST HIGH GOD, is hereby ſet in the ſtrongeſt point of light.

Take away the infinite amiableneſs of the Deity, and we, in effect, ungod him.

He ceaſes to be the GOD OF GLORY.— He ceaſes to be a proper Object of this ſupreme regard, in the eyes of finite intelligences. It is no longer an infinite evil, not to love him. The Law is no longer juſt. The Death of Chriſt is needleſs. And the whole ſyſtem of doctrines revealed in the Bible is ſapped at the foundation. Nothing remains, to a thinking man, but Infidelity.

And yet, dear ASPASIO, this was my very caſe. The infinite amiableneſs of the Deity, which is the real foundation of all true Religion, was wholly left out of the account, in my love and joy, and in all my religious affections. All my love and joy and zeal aroſe from my Faith. And my Faith conſiſted but in believing that Chriſt, pardon and heaven were mine. I rejoiced juſt like the graceleſs *Iſraelites*, in a ſenſe of their great deliverance, and in expectation of ſoon arriving to the promiſed land, a land "flowing with milk and honey, the "glory of all lands." Theirs was a graceleſs, ſelfiſh joy, and ſo was mine. Theirs was ſoon over, and ſo was mine. Their carcaſes finally fell in the wilderneſs; and, but for the ſovereign grace of God, this alſo had been my very caſe.

O, my dear ASPASIO, whoſe entertaining pen gains the attention of thouſands on both ſides the *Atlantic*, pity the ignorance of be-

nighted ſouls, and guard them againſt the dangers, which had well nigh proved the ruin of your own pupil,

Your affectionate

THERON.

LETTER V.

THERON to ASPASIO.

New England, April 4, 1759.

My dear ASPASIO,

WHILE I view GOD the Creator, whoſe almighty Word gave exiſtence to the whole ſyſtem,—while I view him as the original Author and ſole Proprietor of the whole univerſe; whoſe are all things in heaven and earth; I ſee, the right of Government naturally belongs to him. It is meet that he ſhould be KING in his own world: And he cannot but have a rightful authority over the works of his own hands. While I view him as moral Governor of the world, ſeated at the head of the intelligent creation, "on a throne high and lifted up," heaven and earth filled with his glory, as the THRICE HOLY ONE; and hear him utter his voice, ſaying, "I AM THE LORD, and BESIDES ME THERE IS NO OTHER GOD; and hear him command all the world to love and adore and obey him, on pain of eternal

damnation; a ſpirit of love to his glorious Majeſty inſpires me with joy, and makes me exult, to ſee him thus exalted, and thus honoured. I love to hear him proclaim his Law, a Law holy, juſt and good, glorious and amiable. I am glad with all my heart the almighty Monarch of the univerſe is ſo engaging, that all his ſubjects "give unto "God the glory due unto his name (y)."

His Law, his glorious Law, which once, enemy to God as I was, appeared like 'the 'Laws of *Draco*,' now ſhines with a beauty all divine. I had almoſt ſaid, It is "the brightneſs of his glory, and the "expreſs image of his perſon." For indeed it is an exact tranſcript of his glorious perfections, the very picture of his heart, HOLY, JUST and GOOD (z).

When the God of glory dwelt in the Jewiſh temple, in the pillar of cloud, over the mercy-ſeat, his Law was by his ſpecial command depoſited in the Ark, the very holieſt place in the Holy of holies, as the deareſt, choiceſt treaſure. Thus was it done to the Law, which God delighted to honour. But this honour, great as it was, is not to be mentioned, nor is it worthy to come into mind, ſince that infinitely greater regard to the divine Law, which God has ſhewn in the gift of his SON. An incarnate God on the croſs, has magnified the Law, and made it honourable, beyond, infinitely beyond

(y) Pſal. xcvi. 8. (z) Rom. vii. 12.

what was ever done before. But all this honour, infinitely great as it was, was but juſt equal to what the Law deſerved.

While I view God, my Creator, my rightful Lord and Owner, my ſovereign King, the GOD OF GLORY; and ſee his infinite worthineſs of ſupreme love and honour; I feel, that the leaſt diſreſpect to his glorious Majeſty is an infinite evil. I pronounce the Law, in all its rigour, holy, juſt and good. Even as a "miniſtration "of death and condemnation, it appears "glorious (*a*);" and I heartily acquieſce in the equity of the ſentence, with application to myſelf. This makes me feel my need of CHRIST, and prepares my heart to return home to God, for ever to live to him. "For I through the Law am dead to the "Law, that I might live unto God (*b*)."

The Law, my dear ASPASIO, threatens eternal damnation for the very firſt tranſgreſſion, for even the leaſt defect (*c*). I break the Law every moment; and therefore every moment I merit eternal wo: ſuch an infinite evil is ſin. It appeared glorious in the eyes of GOD thus to puniſh ſin, when he made his Law. It appeared glorious in the eyes of CHRIST, that ſin ſhould be thus puniſhed, when he went as a lamb to the altar, and voluntarily ſtretched himſelf upon the croſs to die in the ſinner's room. And

(*a*) 2 Cor. iii. 7, 8. (*b*) Gal. ii. 19.
(*c*) Gal. iij. 10.

in a clear view of the glory of the GOD OF GLORY, I ſee the grounds and reaſons of the Law; it is holy, juſt and good. I ſee why Chriſt was ſo willing to be nailed to the croſs in the ſinner's ſtead; to magnify the Law and make it honourable. And I have fellowſhip, a fellow-feeling with Chriſt in his ſufferings; and in the temper of my heart, am "made conformable to his "death (*d*)." I feel towards God, and Law, and Sin, in a meaſure, as he did; or, to expreſs all my heart in one emphatical phraſe, I AM CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST (*e*). 'The Law is good. I deſerve to die. 'I lay my neck upon the block, or rather 'ſtretch my hands upon the croſs; and ſay, 'The Law is holy, juſt and good. And 'cry, AMEN, AMEN, AMEN, twelve 'times going:' as God, of old, taught his church to do (*f*).

(*d*) Phil. iii. 10. (*e*) Gal ii. 20.

(*f*) Deut. xxvi. 14, 20. I muſt confeſs, my dear ASPASIO, I am ſhocked, to hear ſome divines repreſent the Law as a tyrant, as tyrannizing over Chriſt upon the croſs, as tyrannizing over ſinners, as being ſlain for its tyranny, &c.—For theſe hard ſpeeches are not ſo much againſt the Law, as againſt the God that made it. Juſt as if God and his Law were tyrants, while Chriſt and his Goſpel were all made up of LOVE! But ſhocking as this is, yet I muſt own, this was once the very temper of my heart (See the *Marrow* of *Mod. Div.* with Notes, p. 146.) I loved the Goſpel: I did not love the Law. The dying love of Chriſt, O how ſweet a theme! Law, obligation, duty, were diſagreeable, dead and legal things. Faith, pardon, joy, heaven,

O, my dear ASPASIO,—in the time of the late rebellion, when I lived in *England*, had I, through a hearty attachment to the Pretender's intereſt, ſecretly poiſoned ten of the houſe of Lords, and twenty of the houſe of Commons, from mere ſpite, only becauſe of their loyalty to our rightful Sovereign; and had I laid a plot to blow up King and Parliament, burn the city of *Lon-*

heaven, grace, free grace, theſe topics only raviſhed my heart. Chriſt loved the Law, or he had never died: I only loved myſelf. The honour of his Father's Law was dear to him. (*Heb.* i. 9. *Pſal.* xl. 8. *Matt.* v. 17, 18.) Myſelf alone was dear to me. I viewed his death, his dying love, as all for me. His agony in the garden, his bloody ſweat, his dying groans, all out of love to me! This pleaſed my heart. His Father's glory I had never ſeen: the Law's beauty I had never beheld: the wiſdom of God, in the death of his Son, I had never brought into the account. Love, Love! Love to me! to me! was all in all: this only raviſhed my heart. I loved myſelf, I only loved myſelf. Strange, that I ſhould think my love to Chriſt ſo great! The very joy I had, to think he died for me, was a full proof that I loved him not at all; ſince I did not delight in the Law, nor love the Law, in honour to which he died. Had my wife, or child, or friend, or any whom I loved, been puniſhed by that Law, I had been full of grief, and thought it very hard: For indeed that Law appeared to me like the Laws of *Draco*. But when CHRIST was the victim, I was pleaſed: For I loved myſelf; but CHRIST I did not love. I cared not what he ſuffered, nor why, if I myſelf was ſafe. In truth, if the Law is not holy, juſt and good, glorious and amiable, the death of CHRIST, to anſwer its demands, is the moſt ſhocking affair that ever happened. But I was wholly ſwallowed up in ſelf: And 'if I was 'but ſafe, I cared not how.'

don, and deliver the nation into the hands of a popiſh Pretender,—all through pure malignity,—what would it have availed before a court of juſtice, after I was arraigned, convicted and condemned, to have pleaded,—'O, ſpare my life—I am ſorry 'for what I have done—I will never do ſo 'any more—I will be a good and loyal 'ſubject for the time to come!' Eſpecially, if all the court knew I was a Jacobite by blood, and had ſhewn myſelf a Jacobite, in ten thouſand inſtances all my life long, and had ſtill very much of the heart of a Jacobite; and had lived and died a perfect Jacobite in heart and practice, were it not for ſome irreſiſtible arguments, or rather ſomething more powerful than arguments, that had begun to give me a new turn of mind? Would my penitence be eſteemed any atonement for my horrid crimes? Nay, rather, would not the whole nation cry, "Away with ſuch a vile wretch from the "earth; for he is not fit to live!" And were I brought to view the whole affair in a right light, and to feel right; what would be the language of my heart? Would it not echo back the general cry? 'Right! 'right! away with ſuch a vile wretch from 'the earth! for, indeed, I am not fit to 'live!' And on the Gallows, even in my dying agonies, I ſhould not have the leaſt reaſon to diſlike the law, by which I was condemned; or to love my judges ever the leſs, for pronouncing the ſentence of

condemnation upon me. But, rather, with all my heart, I ought to approve the Law, as good; and eſteem their conduct to be truly praiſe-worthy.

But to murder thirty of my fellow-worms, blow up King and Parliament, burn a city, ruin a nation, viewed only as injuries to a civil community, and breaches of a civil law, are NO crimes, in compariſon with riſing in rebellion againſt the INFINITELY GLORIOUS MONARCH OF THE UNIVERSE; compared with whom, the whole created ſyſtem is "leſs than nothing and vanity(*f*)."

Wherefore, in my beſt frames, in my devouteſt hours, when I feel the greateſt veneration for the Deity, and the greateſt regard to his Law, and am moſt ſorry that I ever have been, and am ſtill, ſuch a vile rebel againſt my rightful Sovereign, the

(*f*) Is it a ſinner's duty to be willing to be damned? No, by no means. The damned will for ever hate God: the ſinner ought for ever to love him. The damned will be for ever miſerable: the ſinner is invited to for be ever happy, through Chriſt. His duty is, to be reconciled to God, and return to him through Jeſus Chriſt. Indeed, were there no other way to ſupport the honour of the divine Government, but by the eternal miſery of the ſinner, the ſinner ought to be willing that the honour of the divine Government ſhould be ſupported, although at the expence of his eternal ſufferings. God and Chriſt, angels and ſaints, will all be of this mind, at the day of judgment, with reſpect to the wicked. And they will all judge rightly (*Rom.* ii. 2.) Nor will the wicked have any reaſon to diſlike them for it; but, rather to eſteem their conduct herein truly praiſe-worthy. *Rev.* xix. 1—6.

GOD of GLORY; I am ſo far from thinking that I am fit to live, that my whole heart is ready to ſay, 'No,—but infinitely unfit to 'live! Eternal death is my due! and hell 'my proper home!' Yea, it appears to me, although I had attained to love God and Chriſt in the ſame degree as St PAUL did, and were as willing to die in the cauſe of Religion as he was, that yet I ſhould merit HELL every moment, for not loving God and Chriſt more. And therefore, with him, I would "have no "confidence in the fleſh;" and would ſeek to be found, not in myſelf, but in Chriſt; "not having my own righteouſneſs, but "his (*g*)." And would ſay, "In the Lord "alone have I righteouſneſs, and in him "alone will I glory (*h*)."

Yea, ſuffer me to ſay, I apprehend and verily believe, that even St PAUL himſelf deſerved eternal damnation for that wickedneſs which God ſaw in his heart, then, at that inſtant, when, a little before he died a martyr, he ſaid, "I am now ready to be of-"fered." For although he was willing, quite willing to die for his Maſter; yet he did not love him perfectly, as he ought. He himſelf owns, he had "not already at-"tained, nor was already perfect." But the leaſt defect deſerves puniſhment, yea, eternal damnation. Therefore, St PAUL always felt in his heart, that hell was his

(*g*) Phil. iii. 3, 9. (*h*) Iſa. xlv. 24, 25.

proper due; and always looked on the Law, even as a "miniſtration of death and "condemnation, to be glorious (*i*);" and always placed all his dependence, for acceptance in the ſight of God, on Jeſus Chriſt. He did ſo, not only when firſt converted, but habitually, all the days of his life, to his very laſt breath.

O, in how lively, how ſtriking a manner, are all theſe ſentiments expreſſed in thoſe words of the bleſſed Apoſtle, in *Gal.* ii. 19, 20. which were the genuine language of his heart, and give a picture of the inward temper of his ſoul? "I through the "Law am dead to the Law, that I might "live to God. I am crucified with Chriſt: "nevertheleſs I live; yet not I; but Chriſt "liveth in me: and the life I live in the "fleſh, (even, to my lateſt breath) I live by "the Faith of the Son of God, who loved "me, and gave himſelf for me." "Who "loved me," as his own before the foundation of the world; and in the fulneſs of time, "gave himſelf for me," as one whom the Father had given to him. For, in the midſt of theſe holy views and gracious exerciſes of heart, St PAUL's calling and election were always ſure; and he ſteadily knew, that he was of that bleſſed number for whom Chriſt died with an abſolute deſign to ſave. Yet this knowledge was not

(*i*) 2 Cor. iii. 7, 9.

the foundation, but rather the conſequence of his Faith and Holineſs.

Your THERON does no more doubt of God's readineſs to be reconciled to the ſinner, that returns to him through Jeſus Chriſt, than he doubts of the truth of the Goſpel. He believes the one juſt as firmly as he believes the other. If the chief facts related in the Goſpel are true, he knows this conſequence is equally true. If God has ſo pitied this apoſtate world, as to give his own Son to die a ſacrifice for ſin, to anſwer the demands of his Law, and ſecure the honour of his Government, for this very end, that "he might be juſt, and "yet the juſtifier of him that believeth "in Jeſus,"—and if he has teſtified his acceptance of the atonement, by raiſing him from the dead, and ſetting him at his own right hand in heaven:—I ſay, if theſe FACTS are true, your THERON knows, the conſequence cannot but be true, namely, that any ſinner, how ill-deſerving ſoever, who, upon the invitation of the Goſpel, ſhall repent and be converted, ſhall return to God through Jeſus Chriſt, he will be accepted, pardoned, and ſaved, for Chriſt's ſake. And, "beholding, as in a glaſs, the glory of the "Lord," I cannot but return, and give up myſelf to God, through Jeſus Chriſt, with all my heart (*k*).

(*k*) Pſal. cx. 3. John xvii. 3, 8. Pſal. ix. 10.

Such were the views, ſuch were the tempers of the Apoſtle PAUL, who wrote, and of the chriſtians to whom he directed his epiſtles; as he himſelf affirms, 2 *Cor.* iii. 18. And it was under ſuch views, and in conſequence of ſuch tempers, that they were aſſured, the ſpiritual and everlaſting bleſſings of the Goſpel were theirs; as another Apoſtle aſſerts, 1 *John* ii. 3, 4, 5. And in ſuch views, and with ſuch tempers, St PAUL might well expect, that the conſideration of the infinite goodneſs of God towards them,—in their election, redemption, effectual calling, juſtification, adoption, ſanctification, and in the eternal joys of heaven, to be certainly beſtowed upon them,—would powerfully animate them "to preſent "themſelves a living ſacrifice to God," to be for ever entirely his (*l*).

The ſaints at *Rome*, viewed "the wrath "of God as revealed from heaven againſt "ALL ungodlineſs," againſt the leaſt ſin,—felt themſelves without excuſe, their mouths ſtopt, guilty before God, according to Law; a Law holy, juſt and good—were therefore dead to the Law, and married to Chriſt—exerciſed Faith in the blood of Chriſt, depending entirely on free grace through the redemption which is in Chriſt Jeſus. And as

(*l*) Rom. xii. 1.

as by virtue of their union with *Adam* they became ſinners; ſo by virtue of their union with Chriſt, by a true and living Faith, they became righteous. And were dead to ſin, ſo that they could not any longer live therein. For they not only approved the Law as holy, juſt and good, but even "delighted in the Law of God "after the inward man," and maintained a conſtant conflict againſt every contrary biaſs. For they were made partakers of the divine nature, had every one of them "the Spirit of Chriſt dwelling in them; "and walked not after the fleſh, but after "the Spirit,"—were daily led by the Spirit, and lived under the government of divine grace; feeling the temper of children towards God; "crying, Abba, Father." "And if children," they knew they were "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jeſus "Chriſt." And as they were willing to ſuffer with Chriſt, they expected to reign with him. And they "eſteemed the ſuf-"ferings of this preſent life not worthy "to be compared with the glory" they had in view, in a future ſtate. Beſides, they found by experience, that all their ſufferings "worked together for their good," brought them nearer to God, and made them more like him. And they were perſuaded, that nothing in life or death ſhould

"ever ſeparate them from the love of God:" who, of his mere ſovereign grace, had predeſtinated, called, and done all things for them; not becauſe they had any claim to make, but becauſe "he would have mercy "on whom he would have mercy; of the "ſame lump making one a veſſel to hon-"our, and another a veſſel to diſhonour." Which ſovereign right to diſpoſe of his own grace, they ſaw belonged to God; "of whom, and by whom, and to whom "are all things; to whom be glory for "ever!"—Wherefore, as the fitteſt and happieſt thing in the world, they brought themſelves, ſoul and body, as the Jew uſed to bring his bullock to the altar, and preſented themſelves a living a ſacrifice to God—ſeeking daily to be more and more transformed into the divine image—and devoting themſelves, in all humility and love, to the duties of their ſeveral places—"not "ſlothful in buſineſs, but fervent in ſpirit, "ſerving the Lord." (Pleaſe to read the twelve firſt chapters of the epiſtle to the *Romans*.)

The ſaints at *Epheſus* alſo, who formerly had their "underſtandings darkened, their "hearts blinded, and alienated from God;" yea, who were quite dead in ſin; and ſo far from any right to claim mercy, that they were "without Chriſt, having no hope, "and without God in the world;" yea,

even "by nature children of wrath:" yet theſe, of God's mere ſovereign grace, according to his "purpoſe before the foun-"dation of the world," were quickened, had divine life communicated to them, were raiſed from the dead, were brought to know Jeſus Chriſt, and truſt in him; in conſequence of which they were ſealed, had the holy Spirit given to dwell in them, whereby they were furniſhed to all good works. And conſcious to this divine change, and to the glorious bleſſings they were now made partakers of, they were fervently engaged to "walk worthy of the vo-"cation, wherewith they were called,"—to live up to their holy Religion,—to forgive others as God had forgiven them,—and in all things to imitate their heavenly Father; being followers of God as dear children — faithful in relative duties,—doing all "with ſingleneſs of heart, as "unto the Lord, &c."—(Pleaſe to read over the whole epiſtle.)

But time once was, O my dear ASPASIO, when your THERON, not conſcious of any ſanctifying operations in his own breaſt, believed all the bleſſings of the Goſpel to be his,—without any 'evidence from ſcripture, 'ſenſe, or reaſon:' which belief ſerved to ſtill his conſcience, and keep him at eaſe, while blind to the beauty of the divine nature, and a ſtranger to the divine life. And in this

caſe, having no ſufficient evidence from inherent graces, to ſupport his confidence, he was obliged, without any evidence at all from any quarter, reſolutely to maintain his belief, by believing. O, what awful deluſion! How was I like one blindfold; one deſtitute of any ſenſe, or reaſon, or knowledge of the ſcriptures, "led captive by "Satan at his will!—by Satan transformed "into an angel of light."

O, my dear ASPASIO, pity an ignorant benighted world, who love to flatter themſelves, and to hear no cry from their teachers, but PEACE, PEACE;—and guard them againſt the ſad deluſion, which had well-nigh proved the ruin of your own THERON!

If all your ſentiments, as they exiſt in your own mind, are exactly right; if you had not the leaſt deſign to convey one of thoſe miſtaken notions, which your THERON imbibed from your perſuaſive lips; if he miſunderſtood juſt every word, and framed a mere Chimera in his own head, a Chimera you abhor with all your heart: Yet, O my kind, my tender-hearted, my dear ASPASIO, pity an ignorant world, who are like generally to underſtand you as I have done; and in compaſſion to immortal ſouls, be intreated, once more to take your fine, your entertaining, charming pen, which commands the attention of thouſands and ten thouſands through all the *Britiſh* dominions, in *Europe*

and *America*, and warn poor ſinners of their dreadful danger; leſt multitudes periſh in the road,—the bewitching, the enchanting road,—once troden by your own pupil; and in which, but for the ſovereign grace of God, he had been for ever loſt!—It is the humble and earneſt requeſt of

Your ever affectionate

THERON.

FINIS.